

THE EDITOR'S TABLE

Keeping a Diary

VERY few people who have had varied or adventurous lives, or who have evinced sustained interest in art or politics, can fail to keep a journal of their doings and reflections without experiencing pangs of regret. Time and again they will reproach themselves for their indolence, for not one in a million can affirm that the thought of keeping a diary never entered his head.

Everybody resolves at some time or another to maintain a record of his days, and almost everybody fails to do so. The industrious and persistent are well rewarded, and notably if they take advantage of the demands of the circulating libraries for light-hearted autobiography and reminiscence.

It may be argued that the best reading is of diaries composed for the diarist's eye and no other. Pepys and Parson Woodforde and perhaps Hickey are prime examples of authors who had no thought of fame or profit as they committed their confidences to paper at the day's end.

But that is not to minimize the value or importance of the other sort of diarist—he who in exact terms is a professional journalist. Arnold Bennett's journals make very good reading indeed, though it is difficult to believe that Bennett ever wrote anything without a shrewd notion of its cash value.

But there can be no question that the jottings that are made with a view to publication are bound to lack the piquancy of the strictly private sort. To keep a diary which is to be the foundation of a published book, and to retain some of the essential quality of candour, is a difficult accomplishment. It has been achieved by Mr. Hector Bolitho, the New Zealander who has earned a reputation in this country as the biographer of nineteenth century English royalty.

At the beginning of the war, Mr. Bolitho was given a job in the Air Ministry. Following the excellent military maxim that the whole art of roughing it is to be no more uncomfortable than is absolutely necessary, he established his living quarters in a hotel in the Strand. His new book* is a notebook of the first two and a half years of the war, as he experienced them in London.

Many people, some of them with names well-known in England and America, passed through the hotel during those two and a half years, and Mr. Bolitho seems to have been quickly on easy terms of conversation with them, exchanging views and experiences, the gist of which is set down in these pages with enviable journalistic skill. He made a point of seeking out airmen, and especially those from New Zealand, and some very vivid and moving stories he recounts.

All through the bombing of London Mr. Bolitho was in his hotel in the Strand. Then came the night of the Big Bomb, when the great hotel itself was hit: "The building staggered. One imagined that the vast stone structure was cracking like icing sugar, and that one was living in the last second before death. Glass was flung at us like hail, through an open door. Then one smelled falling masonry. I don't remember a cry or a movement from anybody. We stood still, waiting."

Mr. Bolitho tells with arresting simplicity of the happenings and impressions of that terrible night. "I tell all this," he says, "because I was glad not to have been afraid. It was the conquest of a year. I think now of those first bombs that drove me into the street and of nights when my palms sweated with fear."

This is a candid and honest diary which ought to have its place when the books about the war are weeded out.

* *War in the Strand.* By Hector Bolitho. (Bare and Spottiswoode, 8s. 6d.)

THE COMING GENERATION

CHURCH, NATION AND YOUTH. By D. Hemming, S.S.J.E. (The Church Literature Association, 6d.)

THE dangers and opportunities for the Church in the Government's direction of youth work form the topic of this important booklet. The dangers are grave. The present arrangement of parades makes anticipation in Sunday worship difficult; and State-aided open clubs, which have probably come to stay, will affect the rising generation. "Dilatoriness on our part may well mean that the vast majority of the nation's youth will be taken clean out of the Church's reach."

The opportunities, if they can be seized, are great, and the chief value of Fr. Hemming's booklet is the constructive advice he gives on co-operation with the Government's policy. Many of the clergy fail to co-operate. "I can think," he says, "of several devout Churchmen among club-leaders, who receive no help from their parish priest at all."

If the Church holds aloof from the movement now, the future will be serious, and Fr. Hemming believes that the situation is such that the bishops ought to lead public opinion in insisting that worship is a Christian duty. In the formation of "closed" or denominational clubs in these days of war, the author hardly realizes the difficulty which confronts many clergymen whose parish halls have been requisitioned by authority.

This is, however, a timely and practical paper on a subject of vital importance.

FRIAR'S FANCY

THE PATCH OF BLUE. By Fr. Andrew, S.D.C. (A. R. Mowbray, 1s. 9d.)

HERE are some seventy little poems, six of which have appeared in our columns, full of the spirit of devotion and that sense of the beauty of everyday things which the eye of an artist discerns in the most unlikely quarters. The traffic lights, the cats and dogs in a London street, the black-out through which the priest finds his way to Mass on the morning of St. Thomas' Day, the searchlight, ominous of dangers overhead—all suggest topics to the writer's mind.

Others of these small poems are inspired by the themes removed from mundane events, suggesting the eternal loveliness which lies above the grey and sometimes terrible days in which we live. All who know Fr. Andrew's work will find much to enjoy in this latest collection of short lyrics.

GERMAN LITERATURE

A SHORT HISTORY OF GERMAN LITERATURE. By Gilbert Waterhouse. (Methuen, 6s.)

DR. WATERHOUSE, who is Professor of German at Queen's University, Belfast, has written this book for the use of university students and the higher forms of schools. It will also be useful to other readers who want a brief guide to the history of German literature.

Naturally, in a book which covers, in one hundred and forty pages the period from the ninth to the twentieth centuries, there is not much scope for the consideration of fundamental themes. Readers are provided with little more than a catalogue of writers and their chief works. This, however, is useful, for the educated British public is probably a good deal less well-informed about the outstanding figures in German literature than is the corresponding public in Germany about British literature, though this may have ceased to be true since the advent of Hitler.

One or two points of general interest become clear from a survey of this kind. The most striking is the extent to which German literature has depended on external influences. Shakespeare, Milton and the great English novelists, for instance, have exercised far more influence on German literature than any German authors, including Goethe, have exercised in return. This suggests that in literature, as in other fields, the German genius has shown itself in a capacity for copying and improving on ideas that have been derived from elsewhere.

Special interest attaches to the state of German literature prior to the establishment of the Nazi regime. The tendency to gloat over decadence, which was a feature of the Weimar Republic, prepared the way for a violent reaction. Dr. Waterhouse has little to say about the literary products of Nazism.

AFRAID TO BE FREE

THE FEAR OF FREEDOM. By Erich Fromm. (Kegan Paul, 15s.)

THIS is a real book. It expresses the heart of the modern age. Its author is an exile from his fatherland. He is so for sake of that spiritual integrity for which a man, who understands it, will sacrifice life itself.

But it is a symbol of the tragedy of contemporary civilization that Dr. Fromm has to try to interpret the freedom for which nations hazard all they have, without reference to eternity which alone gives quality to time, or to God but for whom man would have no ultimate significance. The pathos of his argument is that more than once it leads him straight to the fundamental intuitions of the Catholic religion—and he does not see them.

The Renaissance, the Reformation, Capitalism: these words stand for the great transformation which, according to Dr. Fromm, emancipated modern man from the authority of the mediæval State and the mediæval Church. It made him an individual; it conferred on him negative freedom. It made him aware of himself as separate, conscious of his insignificance, smallness and weakness.

Taking him out of his place in the ordered life of Christendom, the transformation left him without meaning and direction, filled with a doubt that paralysed his ability to live. This is the theme of Dr. Fromm's book.

The freedom, continues the argument, which western man won for himself, when he was delivered from the Middle Ages, meant that he was alone and powerless, made anxious by doubt and scepticism, with all his relationships with his fellows poisoned by fear and competition. Threatened by a hostile world, he discovered that freedom was a burden.

It is easy to see why the dictatorships won their victories so cheaply. Man had lost what the Catholic Church had given his fathers, the conviction

of human dignity and independence and of the effect of his actions on his own fate. He had ceased to be an integral part of a meaningful world.

Dr. Fromm says that many were too weary and resigned to resist the Nazi tyranny. But the lower middle class, in Germany particularly, welcomed it because, through all its history, it has loved the strong, hated the weak. The defeat of 1918 had intensified its craving for submission and its lust for power. Dr. Fromm helps to make it credible that there are very many moderns who do not want to be free.

The ultimate spiritual hope of the nations opposed to Fascism is that this authoritarian temper cannot be a permanent escape from the burden of freedom. It is not a solution of the problem but a shelving of it. It will not be outfaced, however, in the strength of that sham individualism by which contemporary people have deluded themselves that they are free, even free from the authority of conscience, while all the time they were automata controlled by public opinion and "common sense." Genuine freedom must transcend mere isolation and individualism.

If he is not to be enslaved by men and things, or at strife with them, man must discover and create harmony. In creative work man finds and makes his right relation to nature, dominating it, serving it, affirming the spirit in and through the natural. Christian realism recognizes, however, what Dr. Fromm has not seen, that it is by the grace of God that a man is able to achieve this spiritual harmony with his environment.

This is the first volume of a new series, the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction. The Editor is Dr. Karl Mannheim. His name is a guarantee that the series will involve a serious study of contemporary social problems. And if further volumes are of the quality of this one, the series will justify itself.

THE DEGRADATION OF EUROPE

PALL OVER EUROPE. Daily Life in German-occupied Europe. By Oswald Dutch. (Gollancz, 6s.)

Most people could guess the sort of thing Mr. Dutch describes in his book—the Gestapo's brutality, the exportation of food from the occupied countries to the Reich, the suppression of freedom in the schools, the attack on religion, fierce punishments for listening to foreign broadcasts, the compulsory recruiting for German farms and factories, the closing of colleges and universities.

But the complete story is based on official German sources and on documents published and certified by the Allied Governments, and interpreted in the light of Mr. Dutch's long residence in Central Europe. The combination of German thoroughness and Nazi wickedness is producing throughout Europe a situation almost too horrible to be described. Merely reading this book leaves a sense of anger and disgust, almost of despair. No more overwhelming justification of the United Nations has yet been published.

We give one or two interesting illustrations. Hitler demands that instead of the eighty million with which he started the war, there shall be at least two hundred and fifty million Germans to dominate Europe and the world. Every son of a German father is to be counted as a German. The Nazis proclaim that monogamy is unnatural and obsolete, and they are threatening and coercing the women and girls of the occupied countries into motherhood, with or without marriage.

The Nazis are determined to degrade the peoples of Europe. In every country occupied by Hitler there has been a mass burning of books. Cinemas in the occupied countries are showing, with Nazi propaganda and war films, only films of an outstandingly erotic character. Citizens of these countries must step into the road when a German soldier or official approaches. National monuments have been blown up.

The Nazis aim to make Europe a single impregnable fortress. All heavy industry, including armament factories, of course, is in German hands. In most countries the controlling interest in every industrial concern was held by the banks. The Nazis took over the banks when they occupied a country. They have bought up every industry, including chemicals, textiles, electricity and mining, without paying a mark for them. For the "occupation costs"

imposed on conquered countries have in one year far exceeded the whole of the Reich national debt as it stood at the outbreak of war.

This Reich arsenal is to be surrounded by agricultural and mining countries to supply the needs of the German war machine. From Norway to Southern France defence lines twenty miles deep, with underground aerodromes, anti-aircraft guns and heavy guns, have been constructed.

The result of all this is something the Nazis cannot understand—a hardening of fierce resistance and a determination to overthrow a foul tyranny. Mr. Dutch reiterates that it is an immediate obligation of the United Nations, and especially Britain and the United States, to take measures to prevent an outburst of embittered nationalism devastating Europe as it did after the last war.

RELIGION IN SERBIA

SERBIAN CHURCH LIFE. By R. M. French. (S.P.C.K., 3s. 6d.)

LESS assiduous in worship than the pre-revolutionary Russian, and, like Slav Christians as a whole, looking on the faith mainly from the point of view of right belief, the Serbian peasant displays a facet of religion which must always strike the English-speaking world as unfamiliar.

The Serbians as a race are mentally acute, but, owing to the lack of the ministry of preaching, backward in intellectual development, except in the towns where the Church finds it hard to withstand the "acids of modernity" and the growth of materialism.

Mr. French, whose knowledge of Serbian life is unrivalled, gives a picture of folk-religion in which survivals of pagan custom play a large part. It will be interesting for the historian of the future to estimate the contribution made to their Church by the Serbian theological students of St. Sava's Hostel, established in Oxford at the close of the last war. It was from these that Mr. French obtained material for his book.

The reader may wish that Mr. French had been able to write more of the modern aspect of his subject; but what he has given here is full of interest. The unusually good illustrations add to the value of a first-class study of a little known but vitally important part of Christendom.

FASCISM AND NAZI-ISM

ITALY: YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, TO-MORROW. By Paolo Treves. (Gollancz, 4s. 6d.)

BEHEMOTH. By Franz Neumann. (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.)

SIGNOR TREVES is a member of the Free Italy Movement, and of the reconstituted Italian Socialist Party in England. His little book has two merits. First, it is a warning against any facile supposition that, once Germany has been defeated, the Italian problem may be trusted to solve itself, or at all events can safely be neglected. Secondly, it is a reminder of the obvious, but half-forgotten, truism that Italy has been under a Fascist regime for twenty years, and that an entire generation has been born and has grown up under that system and ideology. Otherwise his essay is frankly tedious and trivial.

Mr. Neumann's more bulky volume is also a little tedious in a different way. His laboured study of the structure and practice of National Socialism is fairly stuffed with information, some of it highly apposite, but shows more industry than talent. His work is highly recommended by Professor Laski.

AIR COMMENTARY

THE GREATEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. By Flying Officer X. (Cape, 2s.)

THE aim of this book is to tell the stories of R.A.F. flyers which the newspapers never relate. It is an open secret that the pen-name, Flying Officer X, covers the identity of Mr. H. E. Bates, whose experience in fiction has given him a delicate and sensitive touch in his narration of stark and uncompromising fact.

He deals with his material in his own medium—the short story. He uses the minimum of descriptive background. He reports the scenes that he saw at the stations of Bomber Command to which he was sent; and the conversations frankly recorded are the conversations that he heard.

Mr. Bates is concerned, in this volume, with pilots; and for the most part he deals with the exploits of routine trips. He explains what worlds of courage and devotion lie behind the curt communiques of nightly operations. He describes the hazards run by men, hardly out of their teens, "for which we have struck no special gong"—such incidents, for example, as "the freezing of the bomb-doors of an injured machine, so that, returning to its base, it had to land on three engines with a full bomb-load, in darkness."

But the best chapter in this little book, and the one most characteristic of the writer's sardonic vein of humour, is the story of the young man from Kalgoolie. His parents, vexed at the world-wide hostilities and afraid for their son, kept him in complete ignorance of the outbreak of war. They smashed the radio, discontinued the newspapers, steamed open and hid dangerous correspondence, and shut the door to visitors. A whole year passed. Then the young man from Kalgoolie came upon a newspaper, and read with anger and stupefaction of the bombing of London. When he appeared in England as a pilot, he was like a man with a mission. He had, with ferocious energy, to wipe out the humiliation of that year of ignorance.

TOWN PLANNING

THE CHURCH AND THE URBAN COMMUNITY. By J. Clifford Gill. (Church Literature Association, 1s. 6d.)

MUCH of what Mr. Gill has to say on town planning is excellent, but his book would be all the stronger for a little condensation, and occasionally he makes questionable statements.

Sometimes the tendency to be dogmatic on small controversial points impairs confidence in the author's guidance on larger matters. But the important thing is that public opinion should be aroused. This is best done by a wide consideration of the work of the Oxford Summer School of Christian Sociology, on which the author bases his chapters.

It has been written that "all really grim gardeners should possess a keen sense of humor," and one excellent way of cultivating it is a diligent perusal of F. H. Billington's *Compst for Garden Plot or Thousand-Acre Farm* (Faber, 3s. 6d.), a practical and highly interesting guide to modern methods.