

Trinity College, Dublin, to be Director of the British Institute in Madrid some years ago) of the author and of his principal works of scholarship. In itself, this introduction is a first-rate approach for students of things Spanish to some of the most important and fascinating problems of Spanish literature and history.

SPAIN. By Sacheverell Sitwell. (Batsford; 16s.)

Spain, Sacheverell Sitwell and a Batsford book: one's expectations are indeed raised high, nor are they disappointed. This is not a guide-book but must be placed on the reading list of all those who wish to visit and enjoy Spain and of those who without the visit and enjoyment wish to make a serious attempt to understand Spain. While not a plain record of travel through Spain, it is the result of frequent and thorough explorations, and in it the reader will find descriptions and appreciations of all the chief buildings and much of the landscape, together with some customs and *fiestas* of the country. Combined with the author's fine sensibility and exquisite style is much learning. The 111 photographs are some of the best of Spain to be found anywhere. There are some linguistic slips and some misprints—but one does not approach a Sitwell in the spirit of pedantic cavilling. The book is indispensable for all lovers of Spain and should be compulsory reading for those who are not.

EDWARD SARMIENTO.

THE LOST TRAVELLER. By Antonia White. (Eyre & Spottiswoode; 10s. 6d.)

In her first novel, *Frost in May*, Antonia White revealed an unusual acuity of perception, which was not perhaps matched by much discretion in its use. The discretion a Christian novelist must possess is not necessarily a mere tact that avoids offence: it is rather an awareness, large and untroubled, of the extent of the human mystery, and that means patience in judgment, some tolerance. Seventeen years later Miss White emerges with a second novel which shows her to be a novelist of quite remarkable power. She has lost none of her skill in detail; she has gained immeasurably in range and understanding.

The Lost Traveller is a study in faith. Clara is the daughter of a schoolmaster, a convert to Catholicism, univocal and unpliant of mind, married to a woman who is at once subtle and shallow. The daughter's crisis is resolved in a tragedy (which contains a marvellously observed account of a child, whose governess she is and for whose death she is to some extent responsible) and the novel turns full circle, returns to the beginning. The traveller comes back to the obligations of family and faith, realised now at their true level.

A series of brilliantly described settings—school, an old Catholic

country house, the opera, children's games—brings colour and relief to the central theme, which is developed with a confidence and accuracy of analysis that show a novelist of rare quality. A 'Catholic novel' demands more than an environment of extrinsic devotion: it should reveal something of the compelling implications of faith in the human situation, and this *The Lost Traveller* most certainly does.

THE COCKTAIL PARTY, a Comedy by T. S. Eliot. (Faber; 10s. 6d.)

Reduced to a programme note, the theme of *The Cocktail Party* would at once seem slender and sublime. The miseries of half-a-dozen people at a party are usual: a wife (Lavinia) has left her husband (Edward), who is in love with a beautiful young woman (Celia) to whom an earnest young man (Peter) is also attracted. An unidentified guest, who proves later to be Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, a distinguished psychiatrist, effects the reconciliation of Lavinia and Edward, and encourages Celia's need for atonement by sending her to join a nursing order in Asia, where she is crucified by the natives. Two other characters, the elderly and highly comic Julia, and Alex, much-travelled and always in the know, are often in evidence, but their role is that of a chorus, yet one that is far from static. The play is in fact dependent on the mysterious psychiatrist, and the second act, which takes place in his consulting-room, resolves the conflict in terms of the religious issue with which Mr Eliot is throughout concerned.

But much lies hidden. With Mr Eliot, as with ice-bergs, what is not immediately evident is what matters most. And the texture of his verse is deceptive, glancing with little warning from drawing-room wit to the analysis of despair, from joke to paradox and beyond to the inexpressible need of God. It is verse to be spoken, and no one who has not heard it can, one supposes, make a useful judgment about its effectiveness on the stage. For *The Cocktail Party* is essentially a piece for the theatre, with skill of device and situation which must escape a reader. Yet the poetry of it, the contemplative assurance of its further ranges; all this emerges from a second and third reading of verse that has been stripped of all that is slack, which matches the mood of a dowager's joke as surely as, at a different level, it does the mood of

I want to be cured
Of a craving for something I cannot find
And of shame of never finding it.

It is true that the very skill of a poet at his height of invention can exasperate those who run, or rather walk, as they read. There must be time for breath, time to adjust the tension to meet what lies beyond the smooth lines, so casual as they seem. For, of the ways out from frustration and pride,