

BLACKFRIARS

commend this as a solid account of that perfect character, which reveals simply and tellingly its conquering charm and the merry holiness that underlay it.

B.J.

THE MASTER OF THE ARMADA. THE LIFE AND REIGN OF PHILIP II OF SPAIN. By Jean H. Mariéjol. (Hamish Hamilton; 18/-.)

Although described as a biography the more valuable portions of Professor Mariéjol's work deal with the organization of the official life in Spain; not with Philip II but with his background. The book, which has been very well produced and adequately translated, is a straightforward piece of historical writing, intelligently planned and informed by a careful perception of the material conditions of the period. It is marked, however, by adherence to the Liberal and democratic views prevalent in late nineteenth century France. These prepossessions, which in no way interfere with the masterly description of the structure of the Hapsburg States, are a serious hindrance in the discussion of the standards and values by which Philip II lived. The profoundly conscious kingship and the spirit of a rather too careful life of devotion are manifestly uncongenial to the author, who does not give any indication that he understands them. This is apparent early in the book in Professor Mariéjol's treatment of the English Marriage. 'But can we be quite certain,' the author writes, 'that this young husband of hers (Mary's) . . . had not cast only too fond an eye at his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Tudor? Elizabeth at this time was twenty-two years of age and her beauty was in striking contrast with the tarnished features of Philip's wife.' It can hardly be contended that this sentence suggests distinction either of thought or of language.

The general outlook is better expressed in a phrase in the excellent second chapter on the Spanish Monarchy. 'A King's confessor, exerting himself to serve the interests of the Prince and the aggrandizement of the State, as well as to safeguard morals and maintain his own credit, might let himself yield to the temptation to reconcile opposites by a triumph of casuistry—that growth which was so peculiarly tenacious in Spanish soil.' This sentence, when pondered, brings out the author's inability to understand the sixteenth century religious mind. How entirely he fails to grasp the simplicity, sometimes sublime and often fatal, which has marked the political action of the Church's children.

It is unfortunate that a book so excellent in the fields of erudition in which the author has specialized should be marred by this insensibility. A final quotation will suffice. 'If Chinchon

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was not a very simple-minded man, we must recognize that this grandee of Spain, like the Duke of Alba and the Regent of the Low Countries, rivalled his master in hypocrisy.' It is characteristic of the dying nineteenth century to be thus drastic.

D.J.A.

MABILLON. By Dom Thierry Ruinart. (Abbaye de Maredsous, 1933; 15 francs.)

Mabillon's learned work is well known and his fame as a scholar assured; not so familiar is his personal life as a priest and a monk. It is the peculiar merit of this account of him by Dom Ruinart, the companion of his labours and his devoted disciple, that it gives us a living picture of the faithful monk, exact in the performance of every monastic duty and inspired by the deepest Christian piety. It is an attractive and edifying portrait. Dom Ruinart traces the whole course of his life, tells of his monastic vocation conceived at the shrine of St. Remy, of his student years interrupted by ill-health, of his great literary achievements, and finally of the very painful illness, endured with exemplary patience, which ended his fruitful career. He writes with the pen of an affectionate disciple, full of admiration for his beloved master and almost inconsolable for his loss. He did not long survive him, but himself died within two years, soon after this life was first published. The original work having become very rare, the Benedictines of Maredsous decided to commemorate the tercentenary of Mabillon's birth (1632-1932) by issuing a modern edition in their well-known *Collection Pax*. We applaud the decision and give this inspiring volume our sincerest commendation.

J.M.

WORLD PANORAMA, 1918-1933. By George Seldes. (Hamish Hamilton; 12/6.)

When a writer sets himself the theme of the last vital years through which the human race has passed, the reader may justly expect an objective and reasonably complete record of facts, either with or without an attempt to inculcate a lesson—an attempt to guide. Either is a noble task. When a 'World Panorama' combines an 'arrangement' of facts which it would be flattering to call unfair with a general impression of complete purposelessness and chaos in human life, it is difficult to assess either the motives of the author or the value of the book. To help or hinder society marks the difference between citizen and criminal. The destroyer is the real reactionary. At intervals the calm voice of the Papal Encyclicals breaks in upon the sea of