

REVIEWS  
BOOK FOR THE MONTH

THIS is a far more important and valuable book than its unpretentious appearance might lead one to suppose.<sup>1</sup> It is the first authoritative essay on the beginnings in England of an educational movement that may well change the whole face of the country. It is authoritative precisely because it is from the pen of one who has not merely seen the need and significance of the Catholic People's College, but has himself travelled towards its realisation along the only authentic way. This way is described very ably in Dom Ralph Russell's Introduction, which quite properly occupies a third of the volume. He wisely observes that 'One of the best ways to understand an idea is to find out how it originated' and what he forthwith enables us to find out is of vital moment to all Catholics of the present day.

From the time that a country schoolmaster (there seems no reason to hide the fact that it is Mr Reginald Trevett) and a small group of like-minded Catholics realised that they were 'not good members of their parish,' and decided to take three years over their preparatory efforts to become so, until the establishment of the Catholic People's College Association, there is a history of unassuming but authentic Catholic Action such as could, and indeed should, be reproduced in every parish in the country. They were unwittingly preparing themselves in the best possible way for the final orientation of their general laudable endeavours.

This orientation was occasioned by the accident of the schoolmaster's happening upon another extremely important booklet—*The Future in Education* by Sir Richard Livingstone—in which some account is given of the Danish 'Højskolen', that is, residential colleges for adults of all strata of society. These schools have been in existence for about a century and have effected an unbelievable improvement in social and moral life. The main reason for their success lies in the fact that in these colleges the corporate life is itself an *Education in Life* (the title of another book by Sir David Livingstone wholly devoted to the Danish højskolen). The little Catholic group realised that here was a means of building up in the most effective way just that Catholic corporate life which they had originally felt so lacking in themselves. They saw that such schools, with a Catholic (instead of a Lutheran) background, were not only a possibility but even a

<sup>1</sup> *Towards a Catholic People's College*. By Reginald Trevett. (Sheed & Ward; 1s. 6d.)

necessity if the growing consciousness of Catholic corporate life and of the opportunities for Catholic leadership were to be brought to full growth and fruitfulness. They were well aware, too, that the idea of People's Colleges might be expected to arouse the interest of the Government before very long and understood the advantage of being in the position of pioneers, with some sort of colleges already established, if and when that time came.

The three papers by Mr Trevett, which make up the rest of his book, outline the purpose, the curriculum and life of the college which 'as yet exists in the imagination and hopes of a few priests and lay-folk'. These few will very soon become many if this book receives the attention it undoubtedly deserves, for many will at once realise the immense desirability of causing the college to exist in actual fact. The now famous Catholic Leadership courses in the Royal Air Force and the recent Birmingham Archdiocesan Leadership Week provide ample proof, if proof indeed be needed, that the kind of Catholic corporative educational life envisaged is practical, attractive, and notably fruitful. There are practical problems to be considered and Mr Trevett deals with these in a practical way. None of them are insurmountable; indeed, in view of the tremendous importance of such colleges, these problems are few and easily surmountable. 'The Catholic religion deals with FACTS', as Mr Trevett rightly points out, and one important fact is that the prevalent heresies of our day are Naturalism and Totalitarianism, and another is that the best practical way of dealing with these heresies is the establishment of a vigorous, informed, integral and corporate Catholic life, and a third is that such a Catholic life depends largely upon just that kind of truly Catholic education which the proposed Catholic People's Colleges are designed to impart. It is inconceivable that any thinking Catholic, reading this booklet, could fail to be moved by the sequence of the above facts.

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CONFUSION OF FACES: *The Struggle between Religion and Secularism in Europe*. A Commentary on German History. By Erich Meissner. (Faber and Faber; 10s. 6d.)

The title is teasing. It reminds one instantly of Max Picard's theory of the deterioration of the human face in Europe within the last few centuries, and how that links up with spiritual breakdown within human society and within the human individual. Or one passes on to the possibility that our world lacks a Common Face in lacking a common mind, unlike the old Israel which was under the direct government of God, before whose Face or Person the community lived and grew. Or again the reference might be to Kierkegaard's theory of the ambiguity of much present-day Christianity,