

Book Reviews

Guy du Pont uses simple names for these, philosophical, scholastic, infused; the first is the result of human effort only, the last of grace only, the second is the result of human effort with grace superadded. It is surely as much the result of personal effort as any good and meritorious act can be. It is acquired. The other matter would require more space than we can afford, and perhaps it would only end in the mere assertion of our own judgment on the meaning of texts.

B.J.

GREYBEARDS AT PLAY. Literature and Art for Old Gentlemen. Written and illustrated by G. K. Chesterton. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6.)

THE JUDGEMENT OF DR. JOHNSON. A Comedy in Three Acts by G. K. Chesterton. (Sheed & Ward; 2/6.)

I suppose Chesterton would like to feel now as he felt when he first wrote his manual of Literature and Art for elderly persons. This is a reprint of the happy journalist out for a lark, and the gleeful drawings are somewhat of a contrast with the more thoughtful pencillings of his later period. The Slade School in his time was to all appearance a livelier place than it is now. People there may have taken themselves less seriously. That cosmic emotion, that conscious kinship with the Universe (not the weekly *Universe*) are here expressed in terms of conviction rather than of aspiration. He is not on the way to Nirvana, but has achieved it on easy terms. And so he sings the easy terms.

But now that he is becoming a Greybeard himself he is at the Play. Those who have seen his 'Magic' can understand his altogether exceptional sense of the spoken word. George Bernard Shaw has made a fortune out of mere conversation, just because it is well-attuned. We have listened hour after hour to it, and we know. But Chesterton's conversation is as much superior to Shaw's as Mozart's is to, say, Hummel's (though the latter could compose like a *gentleman*.) He (G.K.) was born with a better sense of the theatre than Shaw, and his management of event is much superior. Chesterton's conversations *never* go on too long, which is remarkable considering that he himself is happiest when he is talking. Now Shaw's lightest remark in his plays is invariably a little longer than it ought to be, and his blundering efforts after a synthesis of good and evil, as in the portentous interlude of *Man and Superman*, have literally, no end. He says himself that Hell is necessarily monotonous, but we cannot believe it is so monotonous as Shaw. Yet he

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carries off this and other numerous futilities by sheer beauty of diction. Now Chesterton can beat him at diction, and as he has better things to say than Shaw, can beat him at stagecraft too. Why is he not acted? Ah! Why is the British Constitution? Arnold Bennett tries to diagnose the sickness of the British Theatre and gives a fairly reasonable *sagashuation* of its symptoms. He forgets or does not clearly enunciate the most fundamental: You cannot serve God and Mammon. No, nor even the Goddesses-of-the-theatre, and Mammon. He does say what we all suspected. That the theatre-manager has no time to read, and what is much more vital, to ponder, a play, because he is so fearfully taken up with getting the right cretonne for the drawing room settee in the third act. In other words, the Quarter-Master-General is the Commander-in-Chief. Naturally the war is hypertrophied, and becomes a Great War, without any proportion at all between the means and the end. So the Theatre is a Big Business, and the Plays are hopeless. But the good plays remain unacted. Here is one. Many capable producers have cast longing eyes on *Dr. Johnson*, but the central figure must have physical as well as mental personality. Why not Franklyn Dyall for the title role, with Esmé Percy for Jack Wilkes? This at a venture, for we do not know enough actors to cast the whole piece. It cries out for performance. One reward of a good run (if any run at all) would be to induce Mr. Chesterton to go on doing this sort of thing. For he can do it well. He makes Johnson say lots of things better than Boswell had the intelligence to report. Burke discourses on the Constitution, Wilkes utters things so wise and deep that they cannot be dealt with save by the logic of circumstance (just like Political Economy!); and the American Revolution, while leaving the mental imbecile George the Third and the moral imbecile George the Fourth without a rag for their deformities, is himself, with sly and recurrent drollery, shown up strutting on two wooden legs. At the end of this cripples' procession comes the great Doctor, as great or greater than ever before, with a solution like the Day of Judgment for ease and honesty. We admit readily that those who prefer mental fog to fine weather will not like it. But why should they have their way?

J.O'C.

ROUND BY REPENTANCE TOWER. By S. Sagar. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; pp. 180; 5/-.)

The point of this 'study of Carlyle' is that Carlyle's Calvinism 'reposed on a sub-soil of Catholicism.' The author insists on the peasant in Carlyle and 'the peasant is a creation of