

Book Reviews

It is good news that Harpsfield's *Life of More*, which has never been printed, will shortly be published by *The Early English Text Society*.

H.P.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHARACTER. By Dr. Rudolf Allers, M.D., Reader in Psychiatry in the University of Vienna. Translated with an Introduction by E. B. Strauss, M.A., M.D. (Oxon), M.R.C.P. (London). (Sheed & Ward, 1931; 16/- net.)

The translator of Dr. Allers' treatise justly refers to it as 'a unique event' and describes the author as a 'Catholic Adlerian,' which sums up the point of view from which it is written. It is rare indeed to find a work on the Psychology of Character so satisfactory from a psychological as well as a Catholic standpoint as the one before us now.

Dr. Allers does not pretend to have achieved a complete study of the science of characterology: he has limited himself to the laying down of certain psychological principles which he, in common with other individual-psychologists of the school of Alfred Adler, considers fundamental in the formation of character, as well as in those maladjustments which may be described generally as 'neurotic traits.'

Whilst adhering closely to Adlerian doctrines, in opposition to those of psycho-analytic schools, the author does not, he tells us, subscribe unreservedly to everything which is asserted by individual psychologists.

The key to Dr. Allers' teaching is summed up in his statement that 'character is the principle governing man's actions, and his actions are a relation between the person and the universe.' The concepts 'person' and 'character,' so often confused are, he considers, fundamentally distinct. 'Person' represents the 'whole being of man' of which character is a quality essentially transmutable and the result in the main of the individual's reactions to the environment, both material and intellectual.

In other words, greater emphasis is laid on the reactive factors of character-formation than on in-born constitution.

Individual-psychology tends rather to neglect these in-born factors, as Dr. Strauss points out in his introduction, adding, however, that it is a fault in the right direction since on the other hand the reactive factors have been so often unduly neglected.

Insistence on innate constitution as a pre-determining factor leads, it is true, to pessimism if taken too exclusively, but this must not blind us to the fact that certain innate qualities of

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temperament and of inherited dispositions do play a part in the behaviour pattern of an individual, and therefore cannot be ignored even if we do accept as fundamental the Adlerian 'principle of the greatest possible application of the reactive factor.'

Among such reactive factors, the feeling of inferiority, or 'the will to power' and the 'will to community' or community feeling, play an important part. The latter, however, must not be compared with 'Herd instinct,' nor should the feeling of inferiority be identified, as it often is, but inaccurately, with 'inferiority complex.' We find very little mention of 'complexes' in this book.

In close connection with this feeling of inferiority is Adler's doctrine of compensation and over-compensation formulated in the first instance in regard to 'organ inferiorities' and transferred by analogy to psychical functions.

How these principles work out is ably set forth in the section on 'The Psychic life of children,' and also in that dealing with the important subjects of 'Authority,' 'Punishment' and 'Spoiling,' which deserve careful attention.

The child's sense of insecurity and inferiority is the soil in which maladjustments of character grow, displaying themselves eventually in faulty reactions of a compensating nature. How to counteract these developments is dealt with in the subsequent sections of the book.

Much interest and possibly some discussion will be raised concerning Dr. Allers' views on school influences. For reasons we cannot enter into here, he is convincingly opposed to the 'parallel education' or co-education of boys and girls. Schools and institutions can also exercise a baneful influence on a child's character, though the author also recognises their possibilities for good. The main reason for his attitude lies in the primary importance he attaches to the home life and the family influence, which should be the centre of the child's formation.

Among the many subjects treated of I may mention 'Scrupulousness,' which the author considers to be a form of neurosis in which feelings of inferiority and over-compensation assume an important role both structurally and genetically.

In the case of religious difficulties, these more often than not, arise from the influences of childhood.

'It appears to us,' the author says, 'beyond question that intellectual doubts, hostility to religion, inability to recognise the authority of the church, and whatever obstacles there are to the religious life, are all finally bound up in that attitude which we have described as the revolt of the creature against his place in creation and against the finiteness of his humanity' (p. 372).

In conclusion Dr. Allers tells us that it was not his intention 'to explain all the problems of character-formation and training with the help of recent advances in psychology, and that it cannot be maintained that the supernatural element can be excluded. On the contrary, we think we have demonstrated the *limitations of natural means*; and we maintain that a purely naturalistic psychology, however complete and well founded, must eventually break down unless it be co-ordinated with religious knowledge and principles.'

We cannot take leave of this fascinating volume without a reference to the excellence of the translation, which makes it appear as an original work in English rather than the translation of what in its original form is a very difficult book.

We hope that this book will find its way not only to all places where the education of children is the principal concern, but to all those who have the task of education and of character formation confided to them.

G.A.E.

SAINT TERESA IN HER WRITINGS. By R. Hoornaert, D-ès-L.
Translated by Rev. J. Leonard, C.M. (Sheed & Ward; 15/-.)

More brilliant works on St. Teresa might have been chosen for translation into English, but few that are more readable. Yet the Abbé Hoornaert's long work does drag heavily at times, and despite its general high level of excellence it leaves the impression behind that something is missing. It is hard to lay down definitely where the book falls short of its theme, for the fault lies not with the book or the author, whose erudition and admiration for his subject could scarcely be greater, but with the very greatness of St. Teresa herself and of her works, which makes a perfectly satisfactory study of her a thing practically impossible to achieve.

The original title of the work is *Ste. Thérèse écrivain, son milieu, ses facultés, son œuvre*, and this shows a proper grasp of the subject, for no study of St. Teresa as a writer could be complete without a study of her period. Unfortunately this is the very part in which the work fails. Fr. Hoornaert reveals an excellent knowledge of Spanish history and literature, but also, to my mind, a lack of judgment and appreciation of what really constitutes the greatness of sixteenth century Spain. This is clear in a number of relatively unimportant statements, such as: 'In Avila all things remained grimly attached to the Middle Ages' (p. 48), a remark which shows a complete misunderstanding of the transition in Spain from the mediaeval to the