

REVIEWS

SOME VICTORIAN AND GEORGIAN CATHOLICS. By Patrick Braybrooke. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; 7/6.)

In the six essays included in this book, Mr. Braybrooke discusses the 'art and outlook' of six Catholic writers who 'combine a keen Catholicism with genius.' (In spite of Mr. Braybrooke's enthusiasm 'keen Catholicism' scarcely seems a feature of Conrad's novels.) It is perhaps unfortunate that his emphasis of their Catholic outlook suggests that Catholicism in a writer is synonymous with genius. Nor is the literary position of a Victorian or a Georgian more firmly established by a critic's disparagement of modern poetry which he does not understand, and of modern civilisation which he regards as insanity. His assertion that we 'exist,' not 'live,' is somewhat gratuitous.

However, he possesses the virtue of enthusiasm, which, indeed, together with the frequent quotations from the authors, is the chief merit of the book. On the other hand, his loose colloquialisms and the vapid rhetoric into which his enthusiasm sometimes betrays him, his irrelevant generalisations, his paraphrases and explanations of obvious passages, his occasional intolerably arch asides, his lack of economy of speech and style, are hardly to be excused either by his enthusiasm or by the admitted excellence of the subjects of his essays.

J.R.H.

THE MONASTIC CRAFTSMAN. By R. E. Swartwout. (Heffer; 1932.)

The legacy of the Romantic movement is still with us, but it is receiving destructive blows. It is with one of its legends that this book is concerned. Did the medieval monks build their own churches? Romantic opinion emphatically asserts that they did and many picturesque accounts of their activities have been drawn. Commonsense might have suggested that if monks were constantly engaged in considerable numbers with the work of building they would have made very little progress with the regular life. This view is supported by Mr. Swartwout's book—a meticulous examination of the evidence with a well-balanced conclusion. 'Some monks did undoubtedly practice art, but where they did so we usually find them to