

of rendering the paper-lace aspirations of nineteenth century French prayers into English, one might hope for a subtler version than, for instance, 'Notice, I beg, O Lord, that I do not kick against the pricks, and enter my acquiescence, please, on the credit side of the account'. The matter is not so trivial as it may seem, for Mauriac's terrifyingly accurate perception of the overtones of religious devotion is an essential part of his novelist's gift to make every detail have its power, its providential meaning.

Anna Collett can bear comparison with Mauriac's work, because it recognises the same problems, subordinates the pattern of human iniquity to the same ultimate design. Here indeed the issue is simpler: Anna's love for the Italian prisoner has all the anguish, the hopelessness of all conflicts between duty and desire. But Miss Lucas has deliberately sacrificed some of the implications of her theme to the single necessity of the passion that over-rides all else—husband, child, happiness, and at last life itself. For there can be no easy way out. The Faith remains, a rock to be built on, or a rock to be broken against, as it seems. Miss Lucas, with a resolute skill that marks a great advance on her earlier novels, keeps her central characters poised above that rock, until the final choice; 'To have the faith is one thing and a good thing. To live up to it is quite a different thing', says Anna. 'Mario smiled. "Yes, that has occurred to me, too"', he assured her'.

The detail of *Anna Collett*—the raffish friendliness of war-time pubs, the stray encounters hitch-hiking on the Oxford road, the Italian prisoners in the fields, the people with jobs in the Ministries—all this is brilliantly done, and sets off in all its intolerable isolation the fatal love that cannot be. With *Anna Collett* Miss Lucas has achieved a great novel.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

PLEA FOR LIBERTY. By Georges Bernanos. (Dennis Dobson; 8s. 6d.)

Of these six open letters, written from Brazil in December, 1940, and the following year, one is addressed to Americans, one to Europeans, and the remainder to the English.

They contain a vindication of the French people, as opposed to the 'élite bourgeois' who betrayed them; an indictment of the democracies for greed and cynicism, and of the Catholic bishops who have clung to an unjust social order; and a warning that history can only repeat the collapse of the League and the shame exposed at Munich, unless the rights of man replace the rights of Mammon.

'The real scandal is not the war; it is the anarchy of Christian consciences which the war suddenly laid bare.'

Mr Bernanos has no doubt of the coming triumph of the Church, or of the sacrifices that it will require from Catholics. He sees her present seeming impotence, not as a spiritual ebb but rather as a turn of the tide, a marshalling of resources for zero hour.

We are an unreflective people who do not care to recognise or remember national sins. Most of this prophet's burden is apposite, even more apposite than when it was written. Therefore it is a pity that M. Bernanos has chosen a literary form which is bound to seem artificial, and writes in a style which will only attract an intellectual minority. He is too rhetorical and his anger inclines to be shrill (though one is loth, writing from a country which has suffered so much less than France to make this sort of comment). If in some parts of the book political feeling overshadows Christian values, the author errs in company with other brave and tender-hearted champions of the Lord's poor.

COLIN SUMMERFORD.

LE VOYAGE DU CENTURION. By Ernest Psichari. Preface by Paul Bourget. (Editions Louis Conard; 69 francs.)

No one who read this book in the days of its first appearance can have forgotten it, but our knowledge of the writer has been enriched since 1915. We have seen Psichari through the eyes of his friends; we even know now that it was Jacques Maritain and his wife who sent the postcard with the picture of Our Lady of Salette to Ernest Psichari in the desert and this detail, with much else, has helped us to focus Maxence as the grandson of Renan.

In all ways the book has gained by the years which have passed. Written from a unity of purpose, it achieves great beauty of style and atmosphere, but it is the clear intensity of its faith which stands out so vividly against the darkness of our contemporary sky. The issue between Maxence and God, clean cut as the edge of a razor, gives it a quality rare in these times of muzzy philosophies.

It is valuable, too, in that it reveals a type of spirituality essentially French, more necessary than ever to be understood by the Catholics of other nations. And this, though its individuality is single to the point of genius.

For those who have little knowledge of the spirit of Catholic France there could be no better introduction. Paul Bourget's fine preface will help them to an understanding of that for which they must look. The physical atmosphere is conveyed with such actuality that they will hear the sounds of the camp and smell the tang of the desert air: and they will find the soul of France.

D. M.

THEATRE—Cahier I: Essais par Paul Claudel, Charles Vildrac, etc.; 75 francs. Cahier II: Le Théâtre Anglais d'hier et d'aujourd'hui; 75 francs. Cahier III: Aspects du Théâtre Contemporaine en France; 90 francs. (Paris: Editions du Pavois.)

HISTOIRE DU THEATRE. Par Robert Pignarre. (Presses Universitaires de France.)

One of the happiest results of the end of a war is that the arts of civilisation can be free again. Total mobilisation includes the actor,