

and the natural sciences. Sir Maurice Powicke has written: 'in my view the University of Oxford would not be far wrong if she were to honour him as the greatest of her sons'.

Last year the University commemorated the seventh centenary of his death by publishing a volume of essays on his achievements. The contributors are drawn from among the most distinguished of English medievalists. There could be no better proof of the great position gained by Father Daniel Callus both in medieval studies and in the Oxford History School than the fact that he was chosen to be Editor.

The contributors consist of Sir Maurice Powicke, Dr Callus, Dr Smalley, Dr Crombie, Dr Hunt, Dr Srawley, Mr Pantin, Miss Major, Mr Kemp and Dr Hill. The level is therefore inevitably a very high one, yet two contributions seem to stand above the rest: those of Dr Callus and of Mr Pantin. Father Callus writes magisterially of Grosseteste as a scholar; so many years of detailed and expert research have been compressed within seventy pages. Mr Pantin's brilliantly written study on Grosseteste's relationship with the Papacy and with the Crown is as convincing and as illuminating as it is patently un-biased. Both contributions have a significance for medieval studies far wider than the life of Grosseteste.

There is only one serious omission in this volume. All the essays concentrate on Grosseteste's Latin writings. Yet his great Anglo-Norman poem, *Le Chateau d'Amour*, is the *Paradise Lost* of medieval England and was to become current in three Middle English versions. It contains unforgettable images, like that of the Castle of Love with the scarlet glow of its ramparts. It contains one of the most beautiful of medieval elegies on the Mother of God as a 'pucele':

'A nul n'escondit ses amurs
Ne les solaz ne les secur's'.

Above all there is the emphasis on pity: Christ leaving the ninety-and-nine sheep to go seeking after the one, and dying in the place of the man whom Truth and Righteousness have both condemned.

Compared to the *Chateau d'Amour*, the *Reules Seynt Roberd* is pedestrian enough, merely Grosseteste's advice on the management of a great household and estate. Yet, studied in detail together, they could have provided the one thing this volume lacks—the sense of Grosseteste as a personality.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

THE MINT. By 352087 A/c Ross (T. E. Lawrence). (Cape; 17s. 6d.)

The recent public controversy over Mr Richard Aldington's viperish book on T. E. Lawrence has to some extent evaded the main issue about

Lawrence's work. Four questions were raised, or rather shouted: Was Lawrence a charlatan? Was he a liar? Was he a homosexual? Was he illegitimate? Few people, save Mr Philip Toynbee, have asked a fifth and infinitely more relevant question—was Lawrence a good writer; was he in fact a *real* writer at all? Those who work their way through the arid little book under review will be tempted to reply to this fifth question with a curt negative. It can, of course, be argued that *The Mint* is made up from notes scribbled at night in the barrack-room, and should not be judged as a finished work. Yet it was Lawrence himself who re-arranged these notes four years after he had written them, re-wrote some of them and cast the whole into the form of what he somewhat conceitedly called 'an iron, rectangular, abhorrent book, one which no man will willingly read'. The result is *The Mint*, a soft and whining book which no man will willingly read a second time.

The first part of this documentary of the life of recruits in the Royal Air Force after the First World War covers the period August to December 1922. Starving, for some reason best known to himself—all his friends were anxious to help him—Lawrence joined up that summer, suffered for three months at a depot, and when his real identity was discovered, was discharged. Two-and-a-half years later he re-enlisted, in happier and less neurotic frame of mind. It is possible that had *The Mint* been published when it was written it might have been of some interest to Lawrence's generation; today, when the reading public has been saturated with stark accounts of war-time experiences, and when National Service intrudes into almost every family's life, there is nothing very startling about the information Lawrence has to offer. We learn that working-boys use bad language, that sergeants shout, that kit must be folded neatly, that square drill tires the calf-muscles and that doing kitchen-fatigues tends to cover your hands with grease. Intermingled with these querulous statements are set-pieces of deliberate writing, in a 'ninetyish-style. 'Custard whose yellow suavity was to ease the sharpness of boiled apple'; 'the strident activity of red and chocolate footballers'; 'So the appelliant moon conjures me outside into his view'; 'There lies a golden mist of laughter over our hut'. These are random examples, but there are many more from which to choose.

It is always wise to listen to what an author has to say about his own work, for it is usually, even if unintentionally, revealing. In a letter written to E. M. Forster in 1928 Lawrence described the genesis of *The Mint*. 'I wrote it tightly', he told Forster, 'because our clothes are so tight, and our lives so tight in the service. . . . I put in little sentences of landscape (the Park, the Grass, the Moon) to relieve the shadow of servitude somehow.' This certainly explains the custard and the

footballers, the golden mist and the appellant moon. In fact the Forster letter also casts light on the extraordinary self-consciousness of all Lawrence's writing, particularly that of the *Seven Pillars*. Was Lawrence, after all, the last pale literary heir of Oscar Wilde? The circumstances which produced *The Mint*, on the one hand, *De Profundis*, on the other, were dissimilar; yet the same tone of self-pity runs through both, and many passages in both are tainted with an almost identical sweetness of style.

JAMES POPE-HENNESSY

THE LIFE OF DAVID HUME. By Ernest Campbell Mossner. (Nelson; 42s.)

'Awakened after a very agreeable dream that I had found a Diary kept by David Hume, from which it appeared that though his vanity made him publish treatises of skepticism and infidelity, he was in reality a Christian and a very pious Man. He had, I imagined, quieted his mind by thinking that whatever he might appear to the world to show his talents, his religion was between God and his conscience. (I cannot be sure if this thought was in sleep.)' So wrote Boswell in his journal some years after Hume's death. His perplexity, faced with what seemed to him so paradoxical a character, is revealing. So good a man as Hume, Boswell thought, surely must have been a Christian; and his contemporaries, though not always so simple-minded, bear witness to the complexity of character which defies summing up. 'The great infidel', 'Hume the sceptic'—such were the names they called him, side by side with '*le bon David*', or even, in affectionate banter, 'St David' (an appellation which Hume refused to disown, with the remark that 'many a better man has been made a saint before').

Professor Mossner's biography does full justice to this man who has always refused to be pinned down by no matter what neat formula. It is vast, both in scope and in wealth of scholarship; it is sumptuously produced, equipped with portraits and illustrations; above all, it is, from first to last, carried along by a fascination he feels for Hume, a fascination which communicates itself to the reader. There is little unity in Professor Mossner's biography beyond that imposed by its subject himself. If there is a thread running through the book at all, it is the tenuous one of Hume as a 'man of letters'; but it may well be that no more precise and more limiting description would convey the unity underlying Hume's work. His life-long concern to find a clear and convincing language in which to embody his thought is heavily stressed. And little though there is of philosophical reflection in the book, here surely is something of first-rate importance to Hume's philosophy. For his procedure is not systematic and speculative. Even his large-scale philosophical work is like a series of essays bearing a