

## REVIEWS

## HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

THE EMPEROR CHARLES IV. By Bede Jarrett, O.P., M.A. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 10/6.)

This posthumous book by Father Bede Jarrett is a welcome addition to the series of works dealing with broad aspects of the Middle Ages which of late years have enabled the general reader to follow the development of thought on mediaeval history. The reign of the Emperor Charles IV in Germany and Bohemia covered that third quarter of the fourteenth century which has suffered from the highly coloured *naiveté* of Froissart and some of the worst depredations of the historical novelist. It was a period which has provided scope both for the innocent romanticism of English and Scottish writers and for the rather ponderously sinister episodes imagined by Leon Feuchtwanger and the German school. Much has been written of the over-decorated fantastic age with its tangled economics and its attachment to the letter of chivalry. It was an interesting speculation as to what Father Bede would make of it.

Very wisely he decided to approach the subject from the angle of the historian of social theory. This was the more fortunate as it was precisely in this field that his most valuable historical work had been done. It was an aspect with which his studies had long made him familiar, and it removed from the scope of the volume the whole series of delicate, complicated and profoundly insincere political negotiations and manoeuvres the detailed consideration of which was so uncongenial to the author's forthright mind. It was not the detail, but the background of the House of Luxembourg which interested him, and it is the social structure of the Europe of the period which Father Bede sets clearly before his readers. Throughout the volume his economy of statement and direct and happy phrasing carry the story forward. Excellent use has been made of the *Vita Caroli Quarti imperatoris ab ipso Carolo conscripta* and the Emperor's personal characteristics are interestingly described. The wall painting at Burg Karlstein, which serves as frontispiece to the book, reinforces this attractive impression.

Dr. Barker, in an introduction to the volume, has drawn attention to the generalizations which are scattered through Father Bede's narrative and prove both stimulating and straightforward. The vigour of phrase and an interest in the everyday life of the fourteenth century will come as especially refreshing to those readers who are more concerned with the author of the book than with his subject. The sixth chapter on the problem of government is perhaps the most valuable in

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the book and the constitutional position is well described. Mention is made of Charles IV's Dominican connections and there is a balanced appreciation of his general relations with the Church.

One general criticism must be made against the picture which is here presented. The forces of opposition to the Church and to the 'Priests' Emperor' seem under-estimated. This is possibly due to the fact that Father Bede always seemed to find a difficulty in understanding the quality of bitterness. The strength of the fourteenth century opposition can hardly be appreciated adequately unless allowance is made for the tortuous impatience of restraint; the hatred against a possessing class; the curdled dissatisfaction. All this was very far from Father Bede. In addition to the main body of the work, reference should be made to the excellent brief survey provided by Mr. Douglas Woodruff in a foreword and to Dr. Barker's wholly delightful appreciation of Father Bede, whose followers will welcome this final volume, so fresh, stimulating and honest; so entirely characteristic of its author.

DAVID MATHEW.

NEWMAN EN ZIJN 'IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY.' By Paul Sobry. (N.V. Standaard-Boekhandel, Antwerp; Belgian frs. 30.)

This is one of the best scholarly works on Newman that have been written in recent years, but the title is misleading. It is not concerned with Newman's theories of education, nor does it deal *ex professo* with the history of Newman's connections with the National University of Ireland. The real subject of the book might be said to be Newman's style as a reflection of himself and his attitude to life, especially as illustrated in his *Idea of a University*.

If you would like to learn the secret of Newman, you will understand it better after you have read Dr. Sobry's book. You will appreciate better the simplicity and sincerity of his character and the simplicity and sincerity of his style. Perhaps the book will interest you most for the light it throws on the problem of style and what it really means.

The Louvain Professor bases his argument on Newman's own principles. First of all, we must know what style is not. It is not the mere expressing of a truth, nor even its clear enunciation. Scientific formulae enunciate truths with the utmost clarity, but they are rarely praised as literature. Style is more personal. It expresses the living mind, with its thoughts, views, and reasonings in all their moving and changing reality: it is the living, moving, surging shadow of a deep and agitated sea of thinking activity. A small mind is never sufficiently deep nor sufficiently stirred up to give rise to a great style.