

Book Reviews

This story gives us the keynote to the whole book and, since the space one has given to it forbids more, one can only point to the names of the other contributors given at the head of this short notice to assure prospective readers that it is a *multum in parvo Mori* and well calculated to achieve its end in spreading his fame. Finally, one could hardly think of a better kind of greeting from More lovers to each other at this time of the year, when, like the Saint himself, English men and women love to be merry, than this book. W.E.C.

A HISTORY OF EUROPE. By Father Bede Jarrett, O.P. (Sheed & Ward; 12/6 net.)

It is hardly necessary to say that Father Bede Jarrett has written this book well. What is more important is that all Catholics should congratulate themselves on the wisdom or good fortune which led him to write it at all. Anyone whose business at all connects him with Catholic education will agree with me that there was hardly a book which was more badly needed than this and that this book all but perfectly supplies the need.

We cannot write the whole history of the world every time that we sit down to write anything. Practical considerations make it necessary to select and to limit. We have to subdivide the story of Europe, and there is no reason why we should not sub-divide that story into the story of its separate nations as much as in any way. But we must be careful in doing so to remember that our sub-division is but a practical convenience. If once we slip into the error of imagining that it is possible to tell the story of one nation without telling that of its neighbours, or imagining that national history in the old-fashioned sense of the word can have any existence, then we are playing into the hands of our enemies. For it is their contention that the nation is the unit. It is our contention—and the truth—that Christendom is the unit.

Yet it is of little use to tell students that they must understand the whole story of Christendom if we are not able to show them any book from which they can properly learn it. Father Bede Jarrett has once and for all freed a Catholic teacher from his difficulty. For here within the limits of a single cover is the story of Europe—the story of how our society grew from the thought of Greece, the government of Rome and from a religion that is not of this world and of how, when Europe forgets her unity, she forgets it only at her peril.

Father Jarrett in his closing pages traces the present disruption of the world to the evil lessons of Martin Luther. He is

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certainly right to do so. Yet the reader cannot but fear that he is unduly optimistic in thinking that the leaders of Europe have diagnosed her disease with anything of the sureness of touch with which he has diagnosed it himself, or indeed that there is even any general awakening to the need for the re-creation of European unity. One could wish, too, that in his last pages he had said something of the effect on the problem of European unity of the newly risen power of America.

Much of the book, as is inevitable, is filled with close-packed *précis* of events. These pages will be invaluable to the student. But to one who reads the book for pleasure the more attractive pages are those in which Father Bede Jarrett allows himself to use his quite unique gift for summing-up in a page or two the characteristics of an age or of a philosophy. Nothing could be better than the pages, for instance, in which he contrasts the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, or those towards the end of the book in which he considers what was the nature of that peculiar mind of the last century, for which, it seems, that Napoleon Bonaparte and Queen Victoria must share the oddly combined responsibility. He has the power of throwing out a single sentence in which the judicious reader can find the stuff for a whole volume of reflection. Take, for instance, 'England was the one country in Europe in which the Renaissance had never been pagan.'

The *précis* implies a selection of facts, and no two minds would make a precisely similar selection. It would, therefore, be to little purpose to enter into a criticism of what exactly is left out or put in. Only in three places did it strike me that Father Bede Jarrett's selection gave in any way a false impression. In the first place, one might think from his book that, had it not been for the invention of the Salic Law, Edward III's would have been the strongest claim to the French throne. In the second, the phrases used convey the impression that Louis XVI lost his throne and his head merely because of his opposition to the Civil Constitutions of the Clergy. In the third he calls the antagonism of Ulster to Home Rule a 'racial antagonism.' Yet these are petty points. In general, it must be a long time since any book has been published which contained at the same time so much that was true and so much that was important.

May I suggest to the publishers that they issue the book in, say, three separate parts? Students, under our modern dispensations, have to do examinations and to study special periods. This book is in danger of missing those for whom it is primarily

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designed simply because it is not confined to a period. But if, say, the mediaeval chapters could be issued in one part and the post-Reformation chapters in another, the separate parts would, I am certain, find a very ready market among those who were studying the various periods.

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS.

MOUNT ZION. By Gwendolen Greene. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.; 7/6.)

Mrs. Greene was the recipient and editor of the collection of letters published last year under the title *Letters from Friedrich von Hügel to a Niece*. That book brought her letters and questions from all parts of the world. In writing the present book, 'I have,' she says, 'been urged by the desire to answer some of the questions I have been asked—that was my first incentive—and I remember, too, how my uncle used often to beg me to write, saying that Julius Caesar and Mrs. Trollope did not start writing till their middle age. So in their august company I have started off, since I seemed to have something that I wanted to say.'

'Mrs. Greene obviously owes a lot to Von Hügel's thought, though her work is totally different from his.' So say the publishers, and one can only conclude that if they have read Mrs. Greene's work, they have certainly not read Von Hügel's. It is simply not true to say that her work is totally different from his. We have Mrs. Greene's own word that 'to my Uncle I owe, under God, all I see.' And she owes to him not only what she sees, but very often the language in which she expresses it. She seems, indeed, to write for a good deal of the time, not so much with her eye straining to see the object, as with her ear held to catch the words Von Hügel would describe it in. This is a pity, as Mrs. Greene can write simply and well (as the preface shows), whereas Von Hügel's own peculiar style is best left to himself.

What gave Von Hügel his position as one of the sanest and most inspiring spiritual teachers of the day, was his insistence on the need of what he called 'that fundamental Christian virtue, *creatureliness*,' and what, in theological language, is called the special virtue of religion, that attitude of mind and heart which leads to due acknowledgement of God as God, infinitely real, infinitely rich. 'Honour,' says St. Thomas, treating of the virtue of religion, 'is owed to a man by reason of his excelling in some point. To God belongs a unique excellence, because He infinitely transcends all things and transcends them in every possible way.' 'The first and central act of religion,'