

BLACKFRIARS

emerge from the common sense examination of such practical matters as shipping, imported food, tillage, soil erosion, and the danger of a mass production attitude to farming.

The author is a practical farmer, and there is an echo of Cobbett in all that he says.

P. TOWNS.

SPAIN OF THE SPANIARDS. By Bernard Wall. (Sheed & Ward; 5s.)

SPAIN'S ORDEAL. By Robert Sencourt. (Longmans; 10s. 6d.)

Whatever views or doubts may be entertained regarding the responsibilities for the Spanish war, the Spain of Franco is now an established fact, and one which promises to be a very important factor in the future history of Europe. We must endeavour to understand it, and the beliefs and ideals which motivate it, with good will and without prejudice. These two books should, each in its own very different way, enable us materially to do so.

Mr. Wall's is a very engaging sketch—all too brief—of a tour behind and among the Nationalist lines. We are made conscious on every page that Mr. Wall knows and loves Spain, and really understands her people—qualities all too rare among recent writers on the subject. He makes no effort to disguise his attachment or to pretend to a detached moral judgment on the things he saw and heard. It may be objected that Mr. Wall makes an idyll of the whole beautiful business, and there would be some justice in the comment. But it would be pointless, for the idyll he depicts so skilfully is precisely the idyll that inspires all that is best on the Nationalist side, and it is just that that we need to try to understand. He enables us to see things through Spanish eyes.

The issues of the struggle are a very simple matter for Mr. Wall: "It is the struggle between the historical and traditionally religious idea of man and the anti-traditional, futuristic idea of man." A host of argument might be brought up which would tempt us to question so facile an interpretation, and perhaps even the suppositions that lie behind it; but Mr. Wall could not have written so clear and direct a narrative had his view of events been less unsophisticated. If he is naive, his naiveté is that of a vast mass of the Spanish people.

While Mr. Wall writes as though himself a Spaniard of the Spaniards, Mr. Sencourt writes rather with the polite detachment of the *Times*-reading English gentleman. His work is, in its own way, all the more effective for that, and should aid considerably in

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interpreting Franco's Spain to the breed. His scope is far more ambitious than Mr. Wall's: it is to give a thorough account of the origins and development of the struggle. He brings into the foreground the hitherto neglected factor of the virtues and vices of the Spanish temperament, and his interpretations of this are frank and shrewd. Readers of Señor Mendizabal's *The Martyrdom of Spain* will note the omission of consideration of some serious factors which contributed to the final breach of Right and Left, which are less creditable to the Rights. But, on the whole, Mr. Sencourt's analysis is fair and penetrating—particular attention may be called to his stress on the sex-factor in the Spanish hatred for the Church and clergy—but the effect is apt to be marred by occasional lyrical outbursts in the worst propagandist manner which detract from the general seriousness of his work (e.g., p. 51: "This [Jesuit] enterprise in modernising Spain was to be strangled to death because of its connection with the name of *Jesus*."') The final summing up is splendid, especially the concluding words:

" . . . many foreigners, some in contemptuous indifference, some for reasons of strong conviction, preferred to think of a compromise. For Spaniards, however, that was beyond the horizon, because they are still unchanged in their tumultousness, their valour, their pride and their excess. But even when compromise is not practical, peace can still be built on wisdom and justice. There is no other foundation on which we can build peace in Spain—or anywhere.

"If instead of hardening each side in its propaganda and its hatred, the partisans of either side would plead, each with his own, the claims of truth, and the safety and welfare of the people, hope would have more substance. For in Spain, even more than elsewhere, it is not the system of the doctrinaire which matters, but the man himself, the man of flesh and blood, of mind and soul.

"It is a questionable service to this man to kill, or even to maim him. It is one thing to offer progress, or salvation, to Spain, and another to reduce it to desolation."

Mr. Wall's book is rounded off with an apt postscript on *W. H. Auden and Spanish Civilisation*.

HENRY GORDON.

MIEKE, LA FIANCÉE DU COIN DU DIABLE. Par Philippe Mosane.

(Desclée, de Brouwer; pp. 214, n.p.)

This is the story of a girl who lived in the "Devil's Corner" of Brussels, where God was called "Henri" (INRI) and there was enough faith to say "Henry was sending it down" when it rained, but where also, with Latin realism, the Devil was carried in procession on his Feast Day.

Mieke, or Mary, deserted by her father (who had savaged a sick wife till she died), was living on her own in Brussels in her 'teens. She was initiated to Socialism young, made progress in