

Ditchling Press in England. In other words, here are books with a limited appeal which yet deserve publication. A private press can do a valuable job for literature as well as for the art of book making if it avoids the temptation to produce exorbitantly priced collector's pieces, with all the signing and numbering and the *de luxe* racket.

Ireland should be able to use its neutrality to good effect in the field of publishing. And Mr. Heseltine's translations of a medieval Welsh poet and Mr. Kavanagh's long poem about Irish rural life are just the things which a commercial publisher would inevitably ignore but which a private press is justified in producing in a limited edition. Yeats once said that 'No poetry has a right to live merely because it is good. It must be the best of its kind.' Again, 'Down in Sligo one sees the whole world in a day's walk, every man in a class. It is too small there for minorities.' Which is to say that the criterion of a metropolitan mass-production may have no sort of relevance for a whole range of writing—the best of its kind,' but that kind isn't a Book Society choice or in demand at Boots.

The gesture of the Irish publication of an English translation of a Welsh poet is delightful, and Mr. Heseltine's easy prose versions are astonishingly loyal to the original. Much is sacrificed: the resonance of language, the rich elaboration of the classic Welsh prosody. But there remains more than an echo of Dafydd's lively fancy, his passion for the detailed loveliness of trees and snow and hair and eye. Thus the Wind, 'Trumpeter of the sky nightly crossing the wild wasteland, dry and swift, trampling the sky on your vast journey, shooting the idle snow down, scattering it like a vain pile of chaff, through the surf your temper flies over the sea.' It is a pity that no indication is given of the original Welsh poems. And Dafydd's birthplace was *Bro Gynin*, spelt so.

The Great Hunger is a sardonic study in rural futility: 'He will hardly remember that life happened to him,' is Mr. Kavanagh's summary of an Irish peasant's days. It is not at all a 'sweet' poem, but it is certainly a healthy rejoinder to the naive optimism that sees all virtue in life on the land while ignoring its frequent sterility, 'Where the seed gets no chance to come through To the fun of the sun.'

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THE ORIGINAL ORDER AND CHAPTERS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL. By F. R. Hoare. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

Theories about the Gospels which are based upon mathematical computations are apt to be somewhat tiresome to the non-mathematical and suspect to the ordinary critic, who may perhaps feel (not always justly) that figures can be made to prove anything. Here, however, arithmetic is invoked in support of a theory now by no means new that for some unknown reason the original auto-

graph of St. John's Gospel was tampered with, presumably by accident, before its publication and that the order of certain incidents and passages was accordingly upset. The present study is a very elaborate and painstaking attempt to establish the 'original' order and chapter divisions of the Gospel before the rearrangement took place. What is new in Mr. Hoare's treatment is the attempt to reconstruct the actual content of each sheet of the original fair copy by means of a detailed arithmetical analysis of the Gospel and of the 'displacements' in general.

According to Mr. Hoare no less than twenty-one transpositions have to be made in order to recover the original order of the text as dictated by St. John. This is certainly rather a tall order, but Mr. Hoare claims that all these transpositions not only conform to his arithmetical analysis but also to natural breaks or discontinuities in the sense of the text. The result of making all these alterations in the order of the text is, he claims, a great improvement in the sense and a closer conformity with the chronological requirements of the Synoptic Gospels.

Enthusiastic though he is about the merits of his own solution of the 'displacements,' Mr. Hoare would not by any means claim that it is the only reasonable alternative. He tells us that the purpose of his reconstruction is 'only to show that there is no mechanical or psychological difficulty in accounting for the existence of St. John's Gospel in its original form, as a faulty reconstruction made after the original document had fallen into partial confusion' (p. 101). We are left free to retain another explanation if we prefer. The real trouble about his reconstruction is that it requires too many coincidences and involves too much conjecture. In addition to assuming that the leaves were actually disarranged before publication we have also to assume that for some unknown reason St. John was unable to check his MS again before it was sent out, and also that each sheet of papyrus contained exactly one column of twenty lines each containing about twenty words. Other assumptions which have to be made on this theory are: (1) that neither the original rough copy dictated by St. John nor the author himself were available to restore the original order in all its correctness after the dislocations had taken place; (2) that the scribe could not remember the correct order (although he had already taken down the rough copy); (3) that the fair copy that suffered the disarrangement was made up of unglued and unnumbered papyrus strips; (4) that there was only a single column of writing on each strip; (5) that this fair copy was not a codex but a roll. Not all these assumptions have equal extrinsic probability. For instance, the average width of a column of about twenty letters (such as Mr. Hoare thinks the scribe used) would be between three and four inches, and since the average depth of a roll used for literary purposes seems to have been about nine or ten inches, either the scribe must have wasted a great deal of paper by leaving enormous margins between

the columns (when the sheets were pasted together) or else the papyrus sheets must have been of rather unusual size—i.e., about nine or ten inches by four or five inches.

Even if we assume that all the above conjectures are true, there are still other serious obstacles. For instance, the analysis has omitted altogether the consideration of one famous 'displacement,' viz. that of xviii, 24, which ought apparently to come between vv. 13 and 14 of the same chapter. Again, it is necessary for the theory to assume that the reading *palin* ('again') in iv, 3, is an interpolation—it may be, but it has considerable MS support.

The suggested rearrangement of the Gospel does not therefore carry conviction; for while we are prepared to admit the existence of the problem created by some of these discontinuities and 'displacements' we feel that no compelling reason has been given for changing our view that the real explanation is more likely to lie in the Semitic mind of St. John than in a breeze that blew away the leaves. Nevertheless, we think that Mr. Hoare's book is a noteworthy contribution to the theory of accidental displacement and that he has stated with moderation, thoroughness and lucidity all that can be said from that standpoint.

The book has been very well produced. The format is excellent, and misprints are very few indeed. Considering the intricacy of the printing it is also very cheap at the price.

J. B. ORCHARD.

THE ONLY DOOR OUT. By Mary Wilkes. (Faber; 8s. 6d.).

'The only door out is the door in,' and that door, in this readable story, leads to an Anglican sisterhood, where the heroine finds a troubled peace after a 'good time' at an Oxford women's college. The picture of the religious vocation is interesting, if surprising, to those familiar with an older discipline.

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