

All *first class* works of thought, of art, of scholarship of any kind have been produced by human beings with leisure, independence, a room of their own. Without that, however great the genius, the work cannot be flawless. It will manifest distractions, lack integrity. The reproach that women until recent times, have not shone in the first rank of scholars, can be wholly met by pointing to the fact that for them such conditions have been lacking. This is Mrs. Woolf's thesis, and she illustrates it by a lucid historical sketch showing how women of genius in the past have realised their frustration; Lady Winchelsea spoiling her poetry with hatred, Dorothy Osborne confined to writing letters, Charlotte Brontë with half her genius unexpressed; even Jane Austen hiding her papers under her blotting pad. There is a very practical corollary—the essential basis of such leisure is sufficient cash.

It is a plea for the contemplative life—and that women should have a share in it. There are opponents. Thanks to admirable books like *All Quiet on the Western Front* we are beginning to dissociate the image of war from those of honour and glory. We still need to dissociate the image of woman from that of mental inferiority. It is a barbarous association; and it is comforting to know that so sturdy a Briton, the conservative and cant-hating Dr. Johnson, realised it. But there is another—Mrs. Woolf might be surprised to know—who, seven centuries ago, affirmed her central thesis. When Dominic Guzman, to the aggressive scandal of his contemporaries, abolished manual labour for his Order and substituted study he was pointing out that learning demands leisure and uninterrupted time. He even stressed the point, urging that all temporal matters should be in the hands of lay brethren. But his was an Order for men? Primarily, indeed, but was there not Prouille?

A.M.

SONS OF JACOB. By Mary Grace Ashton. (Murray; 7/6).

Those who have followed the development of Mary Grace Ashton will be delighted with her new book. It is written in the same graphic style as her two earlier books, with an even deeper understanding of the tangled threads of human motive and the intricacies of the free mechanism of the will. The story is a study of three Jewish young men, each of these brothers typical of one phase of Jewish life, the keen business man, the dreaming artist in music, and the irritable and irritatingly inefficient grumbler. But the story is not a study of their complete characters but rather of their characters as

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shown in their relationship to their women-folk; at least this is true of the two elder sons. The youngest son and his father are rather foils to the other personalities than personalities themselves. Naturally, perhaps, the characters of the women-folk are drawn more convincingly than are the characters of the men. We are shewn womanhood as the protector of man, not merely of the artist against a business world, but of the business man against his own hard selfishness. The inefficient grumbler is protected at last by religion, his father by a new opportunity to make money. Of course love, religion, and business are supports of the will-to-live; but it is love that is most explored of the three in the *Sons of Jacob*. We have to think out for ourselves what love is, and then, indeed, how love must be different for the man and the woman. He loves and marries because he needs love; she marries and loves because she sees that she is needed for his love. The man's vague passion seems half selfishness, the woman's practical devotion seems half toil. The man gives everything he has in order to obtain what he needs even more; the woman takes all he has because only so can she give him the complement to his need. He has selfish generosity and she a generous selfishness; he gives to take, and she takes to give. And that, says Miss Ashton, is why the world goes on. We really should not be surprised if this were true.

B. J.

PERIOD. By Hugh Speaight. (Blackwell; 2/6).

In this collection of seven essays, the author, under the invocation of 'the Spirit of Period,' has endeavoured to look into the past, hoping in that way to learn to love the present, which he finds not to his liking. We hope he has succeeded. The excursion he has made, however, does not cover very much ground. He does go back as far as Sappho; but, for the rest, Balzac is the ultimate point to which 'the Spirit of Period' guides him. He has some curious things to say about the Irish and about Jesuit education in his essay on Joyce. His remarks on the Nineties and the days of King Edward are sometimes interesting, but the style throughout is too affected. Censorship worries him, but he is prepared to submit. In publishing these essays he has at least shown that he has the courage of his own, and not infrequently of other people's convictions.

H. J. B. G.