

## REVIEWS

lish literature. Dr. Owst has done this and consequently we shall have to re-write the whole of this part of literary history in England. The Preaching Orders, he points out, affect even language by bringing from foreign education or nationality, foreign words from abroad; and they prepare a common English tongue by disseminating and intermingling different dialects. The influence of the content of their sermons is two-fold: first, a literary influence and secondly a social—the word and the world. Dr. Owst examines the sermons and shows them to be the *main* spring of Allegory, of Social and Political Satires, Miracle and Mystery Plays, Biblical interest and, in their abounding detail from every aspect of medieval life, their humour, directness and raciness, they are the parents of Renaissance Realism. Secondly, in three great chapters (in all 260 pages long) the author shows the preachers, especially the notable Dominican John Bromyard, sweeping the whole of Church and Society with their indignation at the corruption of morals, the decay of the feudal social order and the misery of the poor. Dr. Owst shows how the Catholic Reformers are in no way behind the later Protestants in the violence of their invective against great and humble sinner alike. These three chapters reveal very clearly how far short the mass of medieval men fell of the ideals of medieval society. They knew, but had not assimilated them. Dr. Owst ascribes the Tudor triumph of the Crown over the Church and Nobility to the preachers' denunciation of those bodies and the callous immorality of the Renaissance, and the secession of the Protestants to the reiterated vehemence of a Church preaching the old Dispensation of Fear. But the Feudal Nobility destroyed itself, and the Church can hardly have lost her children both because her Prelates were immoral and her Preachers denounced immorality. A picture of the corrupt populace is enough to explain the fall of the theocracy; the mountain would not come to Mahomet, so he called it a molehill. Dr. Owst shows, however, considerable appreciation of the Catholic attitude as a whole and, in opening out this huge and fascinating field of study, he has made all lovers of English literature permanently indebted to him.

P.D.F.

SIR THOMAS MORE. By Joseph Clayton, F.R.Hist.S. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; pp. 144; 3/6.)

Is there room for another life of Bl. Thomas More? You would have said not; but read this charming biography and you will agree that certainly there was room for this one. It is written with a lightness of touch that yet mates with the spirit of reverence with which it is permeated. We can heartily re-

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commend this as a solid account of that perfect character, which reveals simply and tellingly its conquering charm and the merry holiness that underlay it.

B. J.

THE MASTER OF THE ARMADA. THE LIFE AND REIGN OF PHILIP II OF SPAIN. By Jean H. Mariéjol. (Hamish Hamilton; 18/-.)

Although described as a biography the more valuable portions of Professor Mariéjol's work deal with the organization of the official life in Spain; not with Philip II but with his background. The book, which has been very well produced and adequately translated, is a straightforward piece of historical writing, intelligently planned and informed by a careful perception of the material conditions of the period. It is marked, however, by adherence to the Liberal and democratic views prevalent in late nineteenth century France. These prepossessions, which in no way interfere with the masterly description of the structure of the Hapsburg States, are a serious hindrance in the discussion of the standards and values by which Philip II lived. The profoundly conscious kingship and the spirit of a rather too careful life of devotion are manifestly uncongenial to the author, who does not give any indication that he understands them. This is apparent early in the book in Professor Mariéjol's treatment of the English Marriage. 'But can we be quite certain,' the author writes, 'that this young husband of hers (Mary's) . . . had not cast only too fond an eye at his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Tudor? Elizabeth at this time was twenty-two years of age and her beauty was in striking contrast with the tarnished features of Philip's wife.' It can hardly be contended that this sentence suggests distinction either of thought or of language.

The general outlook is better expressed in a phrase in the excellent second chapter on the Spanish Monarchy. 'A King's confessor, exerting himself to serve the interests of the Prince and the aggrandizement of the State, as well as to safeguard morals and maintain his own credit, might let himself yield to the temptation to reconcile opposites by a triumph of casuistry—that growth which was so peculiarly tenacious in Spanish soil.' This sentence, when pondered, brings out the author's inability to understand the sixteenth century religious mind. How entirely he fails to grasp the simplicity, sometimes sublime and often fatal, which has marked the political action of the Church's children.

It is unfortunate that a book so excellent in the fields of erudition in which the author has specialized should be marred by this insensibility. A final quotation will suffice. 'If Chinchon