

his daughter Maria Edgeworth, that most didactic of novelists, and author of moral and improving tales and educational books innumerable, the typical early Victorian governess minus any orthodox religion. There was, however, another Edgeworth, a cousin of theirs, and far less clever than they, whose not very long life was in the main highly inconspicuous and most hidden, who yet for a brief space attained world-wide fame and will be remembered so long as history continues to be written. He is the subject of this biography, the priest who at the willing risk of his own life stood on the scaffold beside Louis XVI and helped his King to die a splendid and a Christian death. It is well there should be a new *Life in English* of this admirable man. The last such appeared in 1913, and is we imagine long out of print. And new material has come to hand since then. The best pages of this book are those which contain the Abbé's own simple and artless but most moving story of his ministrations in the prison of the Temple, the King's last Mass and Communion, the drive through the endless crowded streets, the scaffold and the guillotine. It is notable that the Abbé Edgeworth makes no mention of his oft-alleged final utterance, that "sublime benediction" cited by Sir A. Alison and by Thomas Carlyle: "Son of S. Louis, ascend to Heaven!" And indeed modern historical criticism has ascribed the phrase to the imagination and inventive genius of a clever French journalist.

The volume under review is too short to quote from. But we may mention that one or two characters emerge from it with a greatly enhanced reputation, notably the exiled Bourbons at whose sad shadow-court in Courland amid poverty and ice and snow the Abbé spent his last years. They were ever his grateful appreciative friends.

One section of the Abbé's *Life* is quite new to us—the curious story of his father's conversion, an instance of a beneficed clergyman of the Church of Ireland becoming a Catholic a hundred years before the Oxford Movement. And most singularly that conversion could be traced back in its beginnings to a conversation with an unnamed Anglican Bishop: "Are you not shocked at the idolatry of the Mass?" asked Mr Edgeworth. "No, sir," was the answer; "they worship not the Host but Christ whom they consider to be therein. You cannot term that worship idolatry." Almost word for word Dr Johnson's well-known reply to a similar question near half-a-century later!

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.

HILAIRE BELLOC. By Robert Hamilton (Douglas Organ; 5s.).

The realization that the author of

"Matilda told such dreadful lies

It made one gasp and stretch one's eyes

has also written a *History of England*, *The Servile State*, *Milton*, *The Four Men*, and a hundred other books on disparate subjects has caused Mr Hamilton to seek in this brochure the basic principle that inspires Belloc and his books. "If I have done nothing more than

indicate the essential underlying unity of his work," he writes, "I shall be content." This unity lies in Belloc's Christian humanism, which is "founded upon the stupendous fact that God himself is a humanist since he paid man the supreme compliment of the Incarnation." A vivid understanding of the Incarnation and the sacramentalism of created things runs through Belloc's thought and determines his attitude to history and sociology. The objects of his studies are people who breathe God's air and live by divine grace, not so many specimens laid out for dissection in the laboratory—or rather slaughter-house—of "exact science" history. His essays see the reflection of the Creator in creatures, and the joy and the verve of the poetry come from the same source as that of Chaucer and Shakespeare. For this reason Belloc will always be recognized even by those who disagree with his principles as one of the greatest writers of the century. His humanism makes his style concrete, factual, visual—qualities which great literature must possess.

All this is Mr Hamilton's thesis which he expounds neatly in fifty-odd pages. Occasionally however he lapses into the fault of which Belloc himself has been accused, unverified assumption and failure to probe evidence to its roots. It is the defect of the humanist's qualities. He sees creation in three dimensions and that, quite rightly, satisfies him. Unfortunately it does not satisfy the academic mind, and however impatient we may feel with the pedantry of professors we have to admit on our humanist principles that they are God's creatures and do command a hearing. So it is dangerous to say 'I quote from memory,' or to suggest that William Walton's *Façade* is a piece of music unique in so far as it produces laughter. This may be true, but some readers may refuse to accept it without proof. These are tiny matters, but such things have been the cause of much misunderstanding of Belloc, and it is only confidence in the agility of the humanist's mind which bids us ask him to try to understand the pedant rather than vice versa. These and one misprint are small defects in a well-planned monograph. It now remains for someone to write the life.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

HOMER: THE ODYSSEY. A new translation by E. V. Rieu. (The Penguin Classics; 1s.).

This volume inaugurates a new Penguin series—a library of classics chosen from many languages and freshly translated for the occasion. Some dozen works are already advertised as in preparation—from the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Russian and Norwegian. The most spectacular choice of a translator is that of Miss Sayers for the *Divine Comedy*.

Mr Rieu's *Odyssey* deserves longer consideration than can be given here. Briefly, its English is more specifically and more consistently modern than that of its predecessors. The translation is well thought out and has many incidental felicities, but one may ask if it is not pitched in too colloquial a tone. After all, modern English has many varieties, and insistence on one of them may sometimes produce