

accepted by will and reason, so become part and parcel of the poet's mind, memory and imagination that they can be said to be part of his experience and appear naturally in his poems. But it is surprising that it should need to be said of a poet who is a monk. The reason may perhaps be seen in the success of a little poem, 'The Reader', which is, in intention, evocative and not reflective.

B. W.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE. Selected Writings edited by Roger Shattuck. (Harvill Press; 12s. 6d.)

This selection from the writings of Guillaume Apollinaire is very interesting, both as a study of surrealist poetry of which he was the theoretician—he is credited with having been the first to use the word—and because it is ample enough to let us arrive at a personal appreciation. Apollinaire gave a direction to modern poetry. He stands out conspicuously in the confused and shifting group of young poets, writers, artists, who in the Paris of the early years of this century lived a Bohemian life of experiment and adventure, without moral, social, or artistic anchorage, seeking absolutely original self-expression.

His critic rightly insists that we cannot accept 'the division of Apollinaire into man, myth, and poet'. The three threads are inextricable. He was born in Rome in 1880, of an unmarried Polish mother. The fantastic suggestion thrown out about his fatherhood, and pointed in this book by the inclusion of a Picasso frontispiece, must be taken in the light of his joy in mystification, of the 'glee' with which he 'cultivated his own myth and his own mystery'; and we might have been spared the innuendo conveyed in the words 'the question is not yet closed'. He was baptised and got a Catholic education in French boarding-schools, read widely and even abstrusely, and for four years travelled in many countries as a tutor, before settling in Paris. He made friends, passing amongst his young associates 'like some joyous god', writes Francis Carco, and much loved by them. From 1903 onwards his literary production was immense: stories, novels, plays, poems, criticism. His first important work, we are told, was a collection of short stories *L'Hérésiarque et Cie*, of which the tone is thus indicated: 'the dogma of the Church of Rome is treated on a par with the extravagant tales of a sailor from Amsterdam'. In 1911 he was unjustly charged with the theft of La Gioconda from the Louvre and underwent a short imprisonment. In 1912 he published *Les Peintres cubistes*, in 1913 *L'Antitradition futuriste*. He took French nationality at the outbreak of the war, fought with enthusiasm, was wounded in the head in 1916 and obliged to take a post in Paris, married—after many passing love-affairs—in 1918, and died a few months later.

From his life and writing two distinct tones emerge: 'a huge gaiety and vitality which carried him through life with apparent assurance,

and an equally strong but slightly muted note of tragedy and despair which was the reverse side of the same life.'

The newness of surrealist poetry was 'automatic writing': but Apollinaire's theory is relatively conservative. He knows that 'the new spirit is full of dangers and snares', and he tries to find a link with French tradition—he himself often echoes Villon.

In spite of frequent profanity and coarseness Apollinaire has an understanding of the Church. In *Zone*, a tragic poem passing from nostalgic memories of pious boyhood through his wanderings to the sordid present, he writes:

*Religion alone has remained entirely fresh religion  
Has remained simple like the hangars at the airfield  
You alone in all Europe are not antique O Christian faith  
The most modern European is you Pope Pius X  
And you whom the windows are watching shame prevents you  
From entering a church and confessing this morning.*

The book is beautifully presented, though with quite a number of misprints. The painstaking Introduction affords a most useful insight into the application of surrealist principles. The translations are very helpful, but here and there are erroneous or miss a point.

We must dissent from our critic in his evaluation of the 'prophetic' quality he attributes to Apollinaire. The New Spirit of the period is really a reflection of its break-up of philosophy and faith, for it is not true that: *Only those can renew the world who are rooted in poetry.*

MARY RYAN

**FAMILY CASE-BOOK.** By Hubert van Zeller. (Collins; 12s. 6d.)

An altogether delightful book—if you are interested in family history and appreciate the delicate analysis of highly individual and original character. Such characters flourished still in the latter half of the nineteenth century and survived into the twentieth; it does not appear likely that our modern democratic way of life, whatever its advantages, will be a soil which can produce such markedly differentiated variety.

The van Zeller family and its connections was more than ordinarily prolific in them, perhaps because of its combination of continental blood with acclimatised Englishry. Dom Hubert's *Family Case-Book* makes fascinating reading not merely because the personalities about whom he tells us—father, mother, uncles, cousins and aunts—are themselves richly individual, not to say eccentric, but because he himself writes of them with nicely-proportioned humour, delicate analytical perception, family *pietas* and spiritual insight; and the result never jars, is of sustained interest and at points provides much food for reflection.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.