

was once in a seminary, but who was removed because of an unsuitable skill as a mimic, it seems) and his sister have just that larger-than-life dimension which childhood's imagination gives. There are 'characters', whether nursemaids and aunts, or M. Félix, the puppet-man, who reflect the skilled observation of the novelist. But there is nothing exaggerated or forced: the grave evocation of earliest years is always true to its purpose. One thing that seems strange in this story of a Catholic family is the total absence of the impact of religion on a boy so perceptive. His obsessional love for the early silent films and for puppets suggests that he would scarcely be neutral where his imagination was stirred. But of the effect—if only by reaction—of religion, there is scarcely a word.

I.E.

BYZANTINE MOSAICS, with an introduction by Peter Meyer. (Batsford; 30s.)

Byzantine Mosaics maintains in every detail the tradition of Batsford publications. There is a very high standard of reproduction. The plates have been most carefully selected; the letterpress is quite inadequate. In the introduction, which is four pages long, Dr Peter Meyer deals with Byzantine mosaics as a whole. His style is epigrammatic, and it seems clear that he is familiar with recent research on mosaic decoration, notably with that of Dr Otto Demus. His essential standpoint seems best expressed in the sentence: 'Byzantine painting, illuminations and mosaics are neither representations nor idealisations—they are allusions, sacred emblems, almost hieroglyphs, therefore akin to script'. Such a view is hardly tenable after the discoveries of the Whittemore-Underwood expedition at Hagia Sophia, and the new knowledge of imperial Byzantine portraiture which has developed from it. It is hardly compatible with the classical reminiscences which were always known to have survived in Byzantine art and whose significance is becoming more and more apparent through the work of Dr Weizmann and the discoveries at Castel Seprio. Yet as a generalisation it would be far more tenable if it was only the art of Norman Sicily and the early Venetian Republic which was under consideration. It is this in fact that should have formed the title of the book, for it is its true subject. One of the illustrations is from Torcello, five are from San Marco, four from Monreale, three from Palermo, the last from Cefalù.

G.M.

SIGRID UNDSET. By A. H. Winsnes. (Sheed and Ward; 15s.)

This book provides quite an adequate introduction to the work of Sigrid Undset. Without either reserves or qualifications, the author accepts Sigrid Undset's attitude to life so that, though this book is called 'a