

Blackfriars

carries off this and other numerous futilities by sheer beauty of diction. Now Chesterton can beat him at diction, and as he has better things to say than Shaw, can beat him at stagecraft too. Why is he not acted? Ah! Why is the British Constitution? Arnold Bennett tries to diagnose the sickness of the British Theatre and gives a fairly reasonable *sagashuation* of its symptoms. He forgets or does not clearly enunciate the most fundamental: You cannot serve God and Mammon. No, nor even the Goddesses-of-the-theatre, and Mammon. He does say what we all suspected. That the theatre-manager has no time to read, and what is much more vital, to ponder, a play, because he is so fearfully taken up with getting the right cretonne for the drawing room settee in the third act. In other words, the Quarter-Master-General is the Commander-in-Chief. Naturally the war is hypertrophied, and becomes a Great War, without any proportion at all between the means and the end. So the Theatre is a Big Business, and the Plays are hopeless. But the good plays remain unacted. Here is one. Many capable producers have cast longing eyes on *Dr. Johnson*, but the central figure must have physical as well as mental personality. Why not Franklyn Dyall for the title role, with Esmé Percy for Jack Wilkes? This at a venture, for we do not know enough actors to cast the whole piece. It cries out for performance. One reward of a good run (if any run at all) would be to induce Mr. Chesterton to go on doing this sort of thing. For he can do it well. He makes Johnson say lots of things better than Boswell had the intelligence to report. Burke discourses on the Constitution, Wilkes utters things so wise and deep that they cannot be dealt with save by the logic of circumstance (just like Political Economy!); and the American Revolution, while leaving the mental imbecile George the Third and the moral imbecile George the Fourth without a rag for their deformities, is himself, with sly and recurrent drollery, shown up strutting on two wooden legs. At the end of this cripples' procession comes the great Doctor, as great or greater than ever before, with a solution like the Day of Judgment for ease and honesty. We admit readily that those who prefer mental fog to fine weather will not like it. But why should they have their way?

J.O'C.

ROUND BY REPENTANCE TOWER. By S. Sagar. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; pp. 180; 5/-.)

The point of this 'study of Carlyle' is that Carlyle's Calvinism 'reposed on a sub-soil of Catholicism.' The author insists on the peasant in Carlyle and 'the peasant is a creation of

Catholic Christendom.' (Still, there are other peasants, in India, for instance, and in eastern Europe, of a different creation; and what of the pre-Christian peasant?) Carlyle unfortunately is 'the peasant who has lost the priest and taken to philosophy.' And then, unfortunately again, Carlyle never read Cobbett; and 'Cobbett could have told him that the Catholic Church was not dead.' If he had only taken up with Cobbett, instead of Cromwell, sighs Mr. Sagar, Carlyle 'might actually have seen the Middle Ages'; and as Cobbett's biographer 'what a life he could have given us!' There it is, and we must put up with the un-Cobbetted *Past and Present*. As for *Frederick the Great*—the 'thirteen years of toil in the barren sand of Brandenburg barbarism is perhaps the most tragic waste of splendid talent in English literature.' Mr. Sagar's essay marks a fresh approach to the subject of Carlyle and avoids the too well worn paths.

J.C.

THE FOUR CHURCHES OF PEKING. By W. Devine. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne; 7/6.)

Peking is worthy of notice, not only as the habitat of primitive man or the goal of the fighting war-lords of to-day, but as the centre of the history of Catholic Missions in China. We welcome the appearance of the book named 'The Four Churches of Peking,' by W. Devine. It gives in a short compass a concise and fair account of the rise and progress of Catholicism in China, and it will prove most useful and interesting to those who desire some knowledge of the story of the Church there. We are grateful to the author both for what of that story he has given us and for what he has omitted, *e.g.*, the dispute on Chinese rites and other matters of controversy. What he says about the future of the Church in that land (p. 219) is probably true, namely, that Catholicism will become a great and recognised power in the country, under much the same conditions which obtain in other so-called Christian lands; though the people as a whole will not be converted to the faith.

If, as we hope, another edition of this book is called for, several corrections will have to be made. There are some awkward misprints, *e.g.*, in dates (p. 138, p. 176). 'Procure' as a substantive is rather French than English; and when the Procurator of Tien-Tsin wrote of Mr. Dunn (p. 178) that though he was a Catholic, he was '*peu pratiquant*,' the English translation, 'he is little practical,' does not convey the real sense of the French. Again, the expression 'the fast of Quarter tense (*sic*)' requires explanation to the ordinary reader. And why,