

about the most entrancing thing on earth. In the simplicity of your innocent heart you ask, What is the most entrancing thing on earth? *You*, my friend, *you*, he says. And you find yourself saying, Of course! Of all interesting things I am the most utterly entrancing—to myself. The Canon's smile becomes almost audible through the printed page: he treats you to a kind of kind irony: he puts bright remarks into your mouth and then tells you how sparkling they are. 'Nicely expressed.' 'Not at all badly put.' He keeps up a gently-flowing dialogue and convinces his reader of a brilliance hitherto unsuspected. He makes you argue and endows you with all the qualities of a scintillating debater. You begin to like him. He is not patronising you: he is not preaching or scolding or nagging. He is only drawing you out, or rather drawing things out of you—*teaching* you and achieving the supreme victory of the teacher, creating sympathy and confidence in his pupil. He lives up to his own dictum, 'in art what we like is what teaches us.'

The matter of the book is all of a piece with the author's enchanting manner. The work is divided under the three main headings—the true, the beautiful and the good, and the transposed order of the last two is important, because it is the author's plea that Bonum is beauty in life, the supreme beauty the beauty of holiness; the highest art is our mysterious collaborating with God in the work of making perfect the soul which God has created. Canon Dimnet has the gift of presenting the Christian and Catholic philosophy of this world and the next in a style and idiom which will win the attention of our modern young men and women. He deliberately avoids both the name and the method known as apologetic just as he disapproves of a certain kind of 'philosopher's philosophy' which may so easily be strangled by technicalities and deprived of life. He hates the pompous and the recondite; he disavows any desire to give us a spiritual book, and yet here we have theology, philosophy, and 'spirituality,' presented attractively in a form we can manage and assimilate. The Canon writes English elegantly and his style is all the more readable and fascinating for the slightly foreign accent. The book is really what it tries to be—'a manual of happy living, a text-book to the art of being happy.'

B.D.

THE WAYS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE: OLD SPIRITUALITY FOR MODERN MEN. By Dom Cuthbert Butler, O.S.B. (London: Sheed & Ward; 1932. Pp. 256. 7/6 net.)

There has long been need for such a book as this. The Ways of Christian Life of course are really only one Way. Lay men

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and women living in the world and desiring, as a growing army of them does desire, to live the Christian life as fully and as intelligently as the circumstances of their state will permit, may therefore reasonably hope to find the most competent direction in the tried teachings and practice of the older religious orders. But where in the great library of spiritual literature, varying so much in merit and suitability, to look for the things most adapted to their needs is not an easy question. Dabbling without discrimination in such books as chance offers is likely to result in incoherent ideas, want of perspective and a hopelessly mistaken emphasis. In the spiritual life, as in all other intelligent undertakings, it is essential to begin by seeing things as a whole and at least in a general way the relation of part to part and part to whole. For the layman beginning to interest himself in the practice of the spiritual life under the direction of the old masters, Abbot Butler has done this important service. He has outlined the contributions of the older orders—Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite—to the spiritual life of the faithful, with added chapters on St. Francis of Sales, Contemplation, the Liturgical Revival. Throughout the book he gives an excellent bibliography of readily accessible books for further reading. The author is to be commended for this latest attack on the stubborn prejudice that an intelligently religious life belongs only to the cloister. The layman will find the learned Abbot strongly confident of his reader's capabilities, without ever feeling that too much is required of him or too little understanding shown of the difficulties and limitations of a busy life.

P.K.M.

AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY. By Rev. George Stebbing, C.S.S.R. (Sands & Co.; 2/6.)

Fr. Stebbing needs no introduction to Catholic readers. His latest work is written (not, as he tells us, at his own suggestion) to provide an historical setting for the problems of philosophy as they are treated in the Scholastic Manual. As a concise summary of the lectures of an experienced teacher the book is possibly admirable and may prove a useful *aide-mémoire* to those who already have a knowledge of the subject, but for the student who makes the book his sole source of study it will prove indigestible. One cannot do justice to a man and his system in a short paragraph, and to attempt to do so is that 'perfunctoriness' of treatment Fr. Stebbing so rightly deprecates.

R.M.