

Fourth, there is an excellent analysis of the *Instruction* of the Holy Office to Local Ordinaries on the Ecumenical Movement 1949, which is sometimes called the Ecumenists' Charter. This document is printed in full (in translation); this is the only Catholic book where it can be found, though it is printed in Bishop G. K. A. Bell's *Documents on Christian Unity*, Series IV. While pointing out the precautionary measures ordered by the Holy See to safeguard abuses in 'reunion' work, Father Leeming does not fail to emphasize that it is also a movement which the Bishops are instructed to promote and foster in every legitimate way; by study, work and prayer, among priests and laity alike, and that the *Instruction* recommends that centres of expert knowledge concerning the ecumenical apostolate should be set up where possible in every diocese.

It is to be hoped that this long-desired book will be circulated and pondered over in seminaries and religious houses, and much read in presbyteries and by the educated laity.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

MEMOIRS OF A RENAISSANCE POPE. THE COMMENTARIES OF PIUS II. An abridgment. (Allen and Unwin; 30s.)

It is surely not without dramatic irony that the *Commentarii* of Pope Pius II (Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini) on the 'memorable events of his time', though written in order to transmit to posterity in his own words a favourable picture of his own personality and pontificate (1458-1464), should have had to wait nearly five hundred years before being published in full. In the earliest late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century editions not only was the authorship falsely attributed to a German copyist but the text itself was heavily cut to suit the somewhat prim counter-reformation standards of propriety. The discovery by Pastor in 1905 of the original text, mainly in Pius' own hand, made the papal authorship incontestable, and between 1936 and 1957 an English translation of the full text of this unique example of papal self-revelation came out in five volumes of the Smith College (Northampton, Mass.) 'Studies in History'. A heavily abridged edition of this has now been published in an arresting scarlet dust-cover and under the alluring title of *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope* by Messrs George Allen and Unwin. The abridgment is the work of the original editor and translator and has been made not with considerations of ecclesiastical propriety in mind but in order to bring the memoirs within the reach of the general reader. Practically all the longer parts dealing with German, Bohemian and other non-Italian affairs, where Pius' knowledge was not first-hand, have been omitted, while over-long speeches put by the author into his own mouth, and occasionally the mouths of others, have been pruned throughout. What remains is concerned chiefly, so far as politics go, with Italian affairs.

Pius II was a remarkable figure, a man of scholarly and critical disposition and not lacking in literary and diplomatic abilities. The *Commentarii*, however, both in the full and the abridged version, are perhaps best described as *Memoirs* since they are completely lacking in form and proportion. They touch indeed upon all the main Italian problems of the Pontificate

—defence against the Turks, the disposal of the Kingdom of Naples, the Pope's hostility towards the Venetians, the career of Sigismondo Malatesta declared by Pius 'canonized to Hell'—but the sole connecting thread is the chronology, and that often very imprecisely indicated, of the Pope's own movements, and the passing incidents of travel jostle with discussion of the most important political issues. The commentaries were, in fact, written, or dictated, day to day, often *en voyage*, and never properly written up afterwards as was intended. We may be glad of this, for perhaps they would otherwise have lost the freshness and attraction of their more personal parts. One may well suspect, however, that we get the real man only occasionally. Pius is out to praise, not to analyse, himself. His vanity and complacency are clear and, whatever his diplomatic skill, his triumphs are often overstated. Only in his pleadings for united Christian action against the Turks, on which so much of his claim to admiration rests, does a note of real *Angst* make itself heard. Here he certainly spent himself unsparingly, even if in pursuit of a phantom.

If the historian has reservations to make on the value of the *Commentarii* as a source of political history, he can share the appreciation which the general reader less concerned with the latter will surely have of the descriptions of the papal journeyings. Pius had an eye for nature and his descriptions of scenery—woods, mountains, prospects, birds, sunshine—are charmingly done. He was a born sight-seer, and delighted in ancient ruins and ancient monasteries with an almost Scott-like romanticism. There are also edifying and vivid descriptions of Subiaco and Grottoferrata and other living monastic communities. The arcadian pictures of the Consistory or the Signatura meeting *al fresco* after a papal picnic almost makes one forget the financial activities of other organs of the Curia which were making it an object of such widespread hatred. Pius with his universal interests may have taken pleasure in describing the newest weapon of his day—the musket, but for all the classically-turned moral maxims which punctuate his text he gives no sign of any real awareness of the great moral issues then facing the Church. Pious he was, no doubt, in his own way. He loved ceremonies, rather than the Liturgy; especially those in which he was the central figure. The accounts of the translation of St Andrew's head to St Peter's and of the Corpus Christi Procession at Viterbo overwhelm us with their pageantry. It is a pity that the short account of the origin of the latter Feast has been cut out.

As in the full edition, the parts struck out by the sixteenth-century censors are italicized. This is very revealing. Not only do passages such as the racy account of Pius' own election and the attempt made on his virtue while on a mission to Scotland as a young man, suffer the blue pencil, but also very many of his hostile and critical reflections upon other people, some accounts of sports watched by the Pope, and a host of minor remarks evidently deemed 'unsuitable'. Thirty illustrations, of monuments, portraits, views, coins, etc., have been introduced which add to the attraction of this welcome volume.

H. O. EVENNETT