

life seen in balance. It was, indeed, as Dr Mathew says, a far cry from the Palazzo Acton at Naples to the *History of Liberty*. A massive intellectual apparatus, which Dr Mathew aptly compares to the reverberating reciprocal engines of the contemporary mechanical world, ground out from Lord Acton's immense knowledge truths of vast importance concerning the political, the social nature of man. Acton's reverence for the central doctrines of the Catholic Church and his admiration for the principles of the English Constitution as seen by Burke, led him to construct, or at least to indicate, a synthesis between these two systems where they affected the cause of human freedom. This cause he saw threatened by anti-social, anti-human institutions and, indeed, we are beginning to see that a properly human society must always be threatened by men who are trying to achieve a polity which is appropriate only to the superman or the animal. This is the importance of Lord Acton's thought, and of the immense authority of his erudition, for the difficulties of our own century and, we trust, Dr Mathew will still have leisure to pursue this vital theme through the years when the great historian emerges from the interwoven cultural influences which are so brilliantly portrayed in this first volume of his life.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

A ROVING RECLUSE. By Peter F. Anson. (Mercier Press; 10s. 6d.)

The latest instalment of Mr Anson's reminiscences is monastic rather than nautical in its emphasis, and its appeal will accordingly be less general. Yet it is dangerous to prophesy: monks are a magnet, and *A Roving Recluse* might be described as a long monastery-crawl; from the Anglican Benedictines of Caldey to Italian Capuchins, with many a gradation between.

Mr Anson writes with inside knowledge of the subtle difficulties that make the monastic life the easiest to admire and the hardest to achieve. For those afflicted with a Huysmans's nostalgia for the romance of the cloister, his candid account of his own experiences should be salutary. Yet his account of Caldey revisited makes one wonder: the shocks he underwent relate to colour and shape, and there is perhaps too small a recognition of the fact that the 'school of the Lord's service' can do without that fascinating décor which gave to an earlier Caldey its special charm.

Mr Anson's illustrations, as ever, give grace to his pages.

I. E.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE. By Stanley Cook. (Pelican: Penguin Books, 1s.)

This book deals with the Canons and Books of the Bible, a brief summary of its contents, a comparison with sacred writings of other religions, some fundamental problems of the Bible, and a note on chronology, with two chapters on understanding and teaching the Bible.