

LAST CHANCE IN AFRICA, by Negley Farson. (Gollancz; 15s.)

This book, that of a visitor in Africa, like every such book, naturally contains much with which any resident in Africa will more or less violently disagree, as indeed he will disagree with other residents' views. The non-African reader must be warned that there are many things which the visitor cannot possibly appreciate, and that even his account of the views of those living in Africa will give a different impression from that which they intended. But this book of Mr Farson's has the merit of drawing as far as possible on local opinion, which he appears to have had abundant opportunity to hear from the best sources; he allows it to stand even where it is divergent. The book gives a fair idea of the confusion of Africa at the present day, and of the confusion of minds, white and black, in face of it. In addition it is a highly readable book of travel. It will do good service if it dissipates out-of-date notions about Africa, and by its great variety of facts and opinions stimulates to further study. As a corrective to this traveller's view, the reading of W. M. MacMillan's *Africa Emergent*, the work of an expert long resident in Africa, might be counselled: it is available as a 'Pelican'.

OSWIN MAGRATH, O.P.

OUTLINE: An Autobiography, by Paul Nash. (Faber; 30s.)

This seems to be an age of biographies and autobiographies. Perhaps the deadening effect of State control, casting its cloak of uniformity over our civilisation, makes men cling so passionately to the personal and individual element and creates a wish among highly developed individuals to write their own lives, and among the general public to read them. Be that as it may, here is an autobiography of the first order which shows the development of an artist from childhood to recent war years. The latter part Paul Nash did not finish before he died in 1946, but it has been published as he left it in outline, and 'Outline' he wished to be the title of his book.

His early years he creates for us very completely. His memory of small incidents which express not only the facts but the feelings of his childhood is remarkable. The house, the winding flight of stairs up to the night nursery, the sinister corner where the black dog might jump out, Aunt Gussie and Mr Dry—all create for us such a vivid scene of his early days that one wonders if his writings will not rank equal in creative quality with his pictures.

As he grows up his descriptions inevitably change from place to persons, and it is refreshing to read his numerous descriptions of people and parties and to have conjured up for us life in Chelsea between the two wars. Here we meet Gordon Bottomley, Sir William Richmond, Professor Tonks, Ben Nicholson, Will Rothenstein, Gordon Craig and

others. In a few words he could be most revealing: for example, speaking of Wilkie Brookes (p. 98), 'He had a great appetite for life and cut at it as into a cake, from odd angles, hoping to find more plums'. As his pictures became more and more concerned with objects and abstract designs and seldom contain figures, one might not realise his many and varied human relationships. There is an enchanting description of his first meeting with 'Bunty' who eventually became his wife: 'The stairs were dark now, so Rupert went first with a candle to light our guests to the street. I came down last, following Bunty. A faint flickering light showed her small hand with its neat kid glove running down the banister rail like a little black mouse—I was suddenly tempted to reach out and catch it.'

His beginnings as an artist, his first experiments, his approach to pundits he records with a rare honesty and an amused detachment. Herbert Read says in his preface that an autobiography is dependent not only on an unusual degree of honesty but also 'on a particular kind of memory—a memory unobscured by prejudice, passion, pride and caution—by half the armoury of the common mind'!

As an artist, Paul Nash had his own particular interpretation of life and evolved a philosophy of his own. He says: 'As I grew up and discovered new places, and later began to record them in drawings and paintings, it was always the inner life of the subject rather than its characteristic lineaments which appealed to me, though that life, of course, is inseparable actually from its physical features.' This aspect towards his subject, which remained with him all his life and developed strongly in later years, he explains more fully in the essays, incorporated at the end of the book, 'Unseen landscapes', 'Bombers' lair', 'The Giant's Stride'. As a war artist he describes himself as a complement to the factual recorder—his opposite number. His pictures, 'The Battle of Britain', 'Totes Meer', his paintings of parachutes in the form of 'aerial flowers', all show an aspect of things beyond the factual. He is an imaginative interpreter of life. He takes the spectator out of the hard world of fact into his own intimate dream world. He is a poet expressing himself through paint and his pictures can only be understood at the poetic level.

But this book is not of interest to artists only, but to the general public at large; for it is a book, not principally about an artist, but first and foremost about a man. If anyone should find his pictures difficult to understand, they will not find his life difficult to understand. It is a very simple life. Why then do his pictures seem complicated and obscure? Perhaps because anyone who devotes their life to the study of one thing arrives at a depth of knowledge greater than that of the general public. So, to an archeologist, flints and fossils are not just old

stones and old bones, but something intensely exciting to him which may give him a piece of knowledge for which he has been searching for years. Thus, to an artist of the calibre of Paul Nash, an old tree-trunk is not just a fallen tree which looks like an animal, but something terrific, revealing the personality of a monster with a magic of its own. He describes the trend of his thoughts in his essay 'Monster Field'. These essays show the workings of his imagination and the process of his thoughts in a remarkable way and add greatly to the understanding and pleasure of his pictures.

But essentially the appeal of this book is to the general public. Its charm lies in the fact that it is the life story of a man, not merely of an artist, albeit a man with a highly developed individuality, and will be appreciated as a human history by men in any walk of life. Mention should be made of the book-cover, excellently designed by his brother, John Nash.

M. FREEMAN.

MEDIEVAL GLASS AT ALL SOULS COLLEGE, by F. E. Hutchinson. (Faber; 21s.)

All Souls College, Oxford, shares with Merton and New College the distinction of retaining a considerable portion of its original painted glass which has escaped, almost by a miracle, the ravages of reformers, puritans and vandals. As at New College, the old glass is now confined to the ante-chapel, though we know that the chapel itself was equally rich in this respect during the ages of Faith. Symonds, a mid-17th-century writer, gives a description of the glass as surviving in 1644, from which we regretfully learn how much has been lost since then. In the late war this fine array of 15th-century art was removed to a place of safety and it was not until 1946 that it was reinstated.

The College accounts show that John Glasier was in charge of the work between 1440 and 1447. The subjects, which consist mainly of Apostles, Saints and Kings, are noteworthy for their artistic qualities and interesting iconography. Some of the glass, i.e. that depicting the Doctors and Kings, was originally in the old library which was replaced by the present imposing structure during the first quarter of the 18th century.

The late Mr G. M. Rushforth, F.S.A.—author of the standard work on the Malvern Priory glass—was originally commissioned by the College authorities to write this book. The undertaking was completed by Canon F. E. Hutchinson who, unfortunately, did not live to see it through the press. Mr E. F. Jacob, his colleague, undertook this final task and added a preface. The book is handsomely produced with two coloured plates and thirty-one pages of photographs in monochrome.