

develops it thoroughly, one might almost say relentlessly, in foreword, introduction and thirteen long chapters which discuss, or rather state, the aim and possibilities of education in every important aspect. He is aware of all the problems and his judgment is always cool and just, so one can be pretty sure of finding a truly Catholic point of view on everything that crops up. There is a chapter on religious instruction and another on the use of the Catechism; he thinks (p. 149) Catholics can fall into the same error about the Catechism that Protestants fell into about the Bible, and wants to re-plan the Catechism along lines he considers more psychological, but attaches more importance to the catechist being steeped in the life and love of Jesus Christ.

F. H. DRINKWATER.

#### LITERATURE

MAN AND LITERATURE. By Norman Nicholson. (S.C.M. Press; 10s. 6d.)

POETRY AND LIFE. An anthology compiled by F. J. Sheed. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Mr. Nicholson describes his book as 'an enquiry into the assumptions as to the nature and purpose of man which underlie much of modern writing.' It is thus a work of criticism, concerned not with literary forms as such, but rather with their religious postulates.

Henry James maintained that 'the only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting.' Mr. Nicholson incurs the dreadful accusation without a tremor. His point is that any writing which is concerned with human society at once involves judgments about human nature. You can't talk about what men *do* without making plain what you think men *are*, what you think men are *for*. These are matters which precede any aesthetic judgment; and in the case of the novel and the drama, whose very stuff is the nature of man revealed in his thoughts, words, works as they grow — first in himself and then in the world beyond himself — they are the ultimate matters, too. This is not to make of the critic merely a  *censor morum*  who draws up a list of 'approved' books that are dogmatically unexceptionable. But it does mean that for him a 'situation' is meant as a human happening, and 'characters' are human persons: if to be arbitrary is to care that human nature as such is not betrayed, then arbitrary he will be.

Mr. Nicholson makes three rough divisions—Liberal Man, Natural Man, Imperfect Man—to correspond to three general attitudes he finds in contemporary writing. Liberal Man is exemplified in the work of such writers as Shaw, Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells; Natural Man in that of Lawrence, the early Huxley, Charles Morgan, Hemingway; Imperfect Man in Joyce, E. M. Forster, Kafka, Graham Greene and many of the younger novelists. Mr. Nicholson's study is not as

bald as such a summary might seem to suggest. His method is one of analysis, and apart from its other merits, *Man and Literature* is a useful guide to what has been written in the last fifty years. It is unencumbered by the pointing of obvious morals, for the authors are left largely to speak for themselves, and in doing so they provide Mr. Nicholson's thesis with the best of all authorities.

'Liberal Man and Natural Man are both simplifications of the real nature of man. They are attempts to explain his being and purpose on one plane—that of progress or that of animal desires.' Hence the last group, who see man as imperfect and somehow in need of redemption, despite their frequent violence and seeming blasphemy, yet represent a return to a conception of man that is at least negatively consistent with a traditional and Christian view. In such a writer as Rex Warner the Fall may be expressed through strange analogies, and the Original Sin of Graham Greene may seem an original obsession—yet here, fundamentally, is something far truer to man's nature than the progressive microbe of Wells or the retrogressive one of Lawrence.

Mr. Sheed's anthology of Catholic poems by Catholic authors, from the Anglo-Saxon *Dream of the Rood* to Gerard Hopkins, is, too, concerned with the nature of man. Perhaps his purpose has been hindered unduly by the very terms of his choice. Have Dryden or Pope or Oscar Wilde, *because* of their Catholicism, a better claim to poetical understanding of the nature of man than Herbert, say, or Browning? There appears to be a taste in America for Catholic categorising in unlikely fields, and the American public for which *Poetry and Life* is apparently primarily designed, will certainly get from it a useful picture of 'what man's life has looked like to the Catholic poets.' A curious transposition of type on p. 187 makes Oscar Wilde the author of 'half-a-dozen poems contributed to a *Paradyze of Dorian Grey*.'

I.E.

POEMS 1937-42. By David Gascoyne. With drawings by Graham Sutherland. (PL Editions—Nicholson and Watson; 8s. 6d.)

Readers of contemporary poetry owe a debt of gratitude to Messrs. Nicholson and Watson for the publication within six months of volumes by the two best under-forty poets in England: Kathleen Raine and David Gascoyne. What is more, this book is embellished with lithographs by Graham Sutherland, which gives it still further cause to be one of the books of modern verse that should find a permanent place in every library.

Tracing a line of development through this book, we find continual progress, the progress of someone trying to find his way about, and not always succeeding, though never losing a sense of direction. The earliest and latest poems are the most successful.

The book begins with a group called *Miserere*. An inclination to liturgical phraseology and even phrases, and indeed the very fact