

## REVIEWS

THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN NEWTON. Edited by C. P. Fendall and E. A. Crutchley. (Cambridge University Press, 1933; 12/6 net.)

If, as some one (was it Disraeli?) once said 'History is but the essence of innumerable Biographies,' then this book may be looked upon as a decided contribution to the history of the Jane Austen epoch. Here we have a vivid and somewhat pleasing picture of one of the more dignified clergy of that peaceful time. The Rev. Benjamin Newton, Fellow of his College and tutor to the Earl of Ailesbury, was presented by his pupil to one of the most valuable Yorkshire livings in his gift, and there spent the best years of his life. He stands half-way between the jovial port-wine pluralists of the eighteenth-century and the grave sedate churchmen of the early days of the Oxford Movement, and is a very creditable specimen of his class, decidedly on a higher level intellectual and otherwise than any of the parsons depicted for us by Miss Austen. Newton kept up his reading and his scholarship, attended well to his duties as a clergyman, and was thoroughly devoted to his parishioners. At the same time, he was a typical country gentleman, he rode and hunted, shot and fished, kept greyhounds, and went to the races. He was a successful farmer and horse-breeder, an excellent and painstaking magistrate, and a good social influence.

His Diary shows us his daily round, and something of his personality, which is a rather charming one. The record is not exciting in any way, and Newton does not seem to have come in close association with any of the celebrities of the day with the exception of David Ricardo, the economist. In politics he was a decided liberal, 'a great enemy to Tyranny, but a greater to Anarchy.' As to religion, 'controversy makes shipwreck of charity'; while so far as Bible and Christian Knowledge Societies are concerned he thinks it better to pray for one fold under one shepherd, leaving the time and measure of accomplishment to the Good Shepherd himself. Newton appears to have had hardly any Catholic contacts, but he enjoyed the writings of that rather latitudinarian priest the Rev. John Chetwode Eustace, whom he oddly describes as 'the best dissenter I have met with.'

F. R. B.

CAVALIER: LETTERS OF WILLIAM BLUNDELL TO HIS FRIENDS, 1620-98. Edited by Margaret Blundell. (Longmans, 1933; 10/6 net.)

Seven miles from Liverpool stands Crosby Hall, an old rambling manor-house of stone, its park hidden in a belt of woodland, the country round still agricultural in character, and

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the little village making its boast that neither ale-house nor Protestant householder have ever been found therein. Here in this strange and unusual oasis, the old Catholic family of Blundell has since the twelfth century held sway, and at terrible cost has clung fast to the ancient Faith. In the long line of the Squires of Crosby, there is no finer figure than that of the Royalist Cavalier and 'invincible Popish Recusant' whose letters are contained in this well-produced volume. quaint, stilted, formal as they are, they yet vividly portray the dreadful times in which the writer lived, and make us realize the veritable martyrdom our Catholic forefathers endured under the Penal Laws. Yet is their dominant note cheerfulness; cheerfulness under dire poverty, crushing fines, cruel ostracism, fell imprisonment, daily peril of death, and constant solicitude for a religion dearer than life itself yet ever proscribed, condemned, persecuted unto blood. The present volume is the fourth that has emerged from the muniment-room at Crosby, and the knowledge that there is there preserved a still unpublished mass of manuscripts, letters, and records makes us hope it will be by no means the last. We should like to hear something of the subsequent fortunes of the Squires of Crosby, and find out why, when in the depressing eighteenth century, so many others of hitherto intense Catholicity fell so sadly away, they themselves remained so splendidly staunch.

F. R. B.

**A HISTORY OF ARAGON AND CATALONIA.** By H. J. Chaytor, Litt.D. (Methuen; 15/-).

The Master of St. Catharine's has produced an admirable and closely packed summary of Aragonese history. The story is carried down until the union with Castile and a brief epilogue deals with the setting up of the Catalan Government on the fall of the monarchy in 1931. The book contains a useful and reasonably short bibliography, appendices chiefly genealogical, and a complete and well-arranged index. The development of the Aragonese dominions is illustrated by seven good maps. The book is in the main a political history, and the attempt to provide a detailed survey within the compass of 284 pages must have proved most difficult. The importance and intrinsic interest of the subject, however, carries the reader forward, and the whole treatment of the subject indicates a mature and balanced judgment. If the path seems at times a trifle arid it is everywhere strewn by boulders of the most diverse information. This is only to be expected in a work which traces its descent from the *Cambridge Modern History* manner, and having regard to the subject matter of the book it is perhaps