

HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Paul Heinisch. (The Liturgical Press, St John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota.)

The ordinary Christian who discovers for himself the fascination of Old Testament history does not want jejune accounts of stories that are much more excitingly told in the Scriptures themselves, but he may very well feel the need of a companion volume which will help him to get a general view of text and context, to sort out dates, genealogies, and geographical details, and to guide him to more specialised studies of particular points of interest. For this purpose Dr Heinisch's volume is the best we have so far received from a Catholic publisher. It covers the ground briefly and simply, giving in each section summaries of the views of different scholars, assessing their value, and relating the books to their cultural and religious background. The bibliography, necessarily an important feature, has wisely not confined itself to Catholic writers, but gives a genuinely representative cross-section of the available literature, its weakness in this respect being the great preponderance of studies in foreign languages. The section on the Flood, for instance, does not list a single article in English, a fact which must to some extent limit its usefulness for the general reader. One may well ask why the technique of the admirable little decorative map on page 354 was not more widely used in other parts of the book, which is amply illustrated with symbolic pictures in a style familiar to readers of *Worship*. A short commentary on these is provided at the end and serves to draw together some of the Old Testament typology. As compositions the drawings are occasionally not very unified, but others are extremely successful and give the book a most refreshing appearance. We do not raise here our one serious doubt which is how far it is wise to endeavour to isolate Old Testament theology in a separate volume.

A.S.

FRED OF OXFORD. The Memoirs of Fred Bickerton. (Evans Bros; 18s.)

There are times when even the most stalwart need to warm themselves by the company of a reassuring personality, and in the case of Fred Bickerton, until recently Head Porter of University College, there can be no question of the personality or the reassurance. He has named his memoirs from the fact that, years ago, a parcel addressed simply to 'Fred of Oxford' reached him quite safely, and the incident speaks for itself. Undoubtedly those who had personal contact with Fred during his more than fifty years of service at the college will derive most pleasure from this book, for at times the glow of genuine enthusiasm, with which the whole thing is lit, has to do duty for a more direct communication. What does, however, come across vividly is the joy of a lifetime spent in work that always implied personal relationships, where class and status were only the incidentals. Its loyalties were never abstract, yet neither were they indiscriminating. The engaging chapter on Masters of University College contains the

aside that some Oxford dons 'are apt to believe that the world ends at the Great Western Railway Station', and perhaps, as one who himself seldom went beyond it, like the best of those he served, he never permitted a confined and specialised world to destroy a youthful openness of outlook. The fact that he could be persuaded to leave the gardening jobs of a well-earned retirement to attempt even the pleasant task of writing an autobiography is witness to his place in a noble and alas! fast disappearing generation that saw possibilities where most of us would only see problems.

**AN INTRODUCTION TO WELSH POETRY.** From the Beginnings to the Sixteenth Century. By Gwyn Williams. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

This book gives an account of Welsh poetry up to the end of the sixteenth century in eight chapters of narrative and comment and quotation and free translation. There are also appendices on prosody and on the Arthurian legend and there is a competent bibliography. The writer has read widely and has consulted authorities. His story is fairly dependable—least so, however, when he deals with the sixteenth century and Renaissance. It is a work of popularisation, and as such admirable, for it is lively and unpedantic, and the translations are often poetry. They are also often wrong. Yet the happy lightheartedness of the whole work precludes exact criticism. For those English readers who may wish to learn something of the nature of Welsh poetry, this book will be the most pleasant introduction and will beget goodwill.

S.L.

**SPAIN AND PORTUGAL** (The World in Colour Series). Edited by Doré Ogrizek. (McGraw-Hill Publishing Company; 30s.)

This charming book is a tourist's pre-guide to Spain and Portugal. It contains a number of independent sections on Art, Literature, History (too short, these, to be much more than lists of names with a quick, qualifying adjective, but very prettily illustrated), followed by impressionistic accounts of such cities as Madrid and Toledo, and of the various regions of Spain. There is a lesson on the bull-fight. Then parallel offices are performed for Portugal, with a sketch of popular art in that country. The whole is lavishly illustrated (roughly, a picture to every page) in a variety of styles, with water-colour tones predominating. There are some vivid observations, and no one will see this book and not want to visit the reality. It is translated from the French and, occasionally, French forms of Spanish names have been inadvertently retained, which is a pity.

E.S.