

centre and their soul. It is this link that binds the apostle to God, both in his prayer and in his action, which makes a unity of his life; which assures him that while he is wholly engaged in temporal things he yet is their master, while assailed with pre-occupations he is yet at peace, while faced with all sorts of difficulties he is never discouraged, while yet in the world he is not of the world. When grasped by the event by his love he grasps God on whom all events depend. When he is seized with anguish because of the failure of his work among others, by his love he seizes God from whom no soul escapes. Beyond all that distresses and disturbs him in time he has an anchor fixed in the peace of eternity, for his heart is fixed on God.'

ALDATE

REVIEWS

PARADOX IN CHESTERTON. By Hugh Kenner. (Sheed & Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Once there was an ineffectual don that durst attack our Chesterton. Now comes a don defending him and to good purpose. The anthology we have long desired of Chesterton's good things is here at least begun. A somewhat excessively donnish introduction need not put the reader off, for the book is full of meat and solves one of the mysteries of Chesterton. The introducer proves his quality in such passages as: 'Embarrassed by the Chesterton fan who is keen about the *Ballad of the White Horse*', and so on.

After this it is not startling to find that in the opinion of the author and the introducer, Chesterton was no poet, although he wrote a thick volume of verse and several subsidiary volumes. The introducer shows a defective sense of the value of words, for here he alters the meaning of a word called poetry. If Chesterton was no poet, neither was Shelley nor Belloc nor anyone you care to mention. Fancy that the ballad of *Lepanto* is no poem; and is not the Harp of Alfred in the *Ballad of the White Horse* such poetry as none could make but Chesterton? 'Cry Haddock and let slip the dogs of war'. As well say Shakespeare's weak point was dramatic effect, or that he was too fond of rhetoric.

The introduction is both profound and suggestive, but seems to us to need careful re-writing. The language is too far away from concrete meaning, too aloof, too abstract, to say nothing of one's feeling that concrete words would express the meaning better. But it contains a telling diagnosis of the philosophical distemper which worked out from the Thomist normality to that Cartesian itch for certitude; that wrong sort of certitude, smothered in a world of raving disorder, but still dryly sure of itself, explaining the universal by the particular, and mental science by physical.

The defence opens out on paradox and the natural history of paradox. The present writer grew up reading the *Daily News*, and conscious that it was its nonconformist readers who first began to be in labour about Chesterton's paradox. Gradually the hunt got up. Those who could not make him out said it was because he was full of paradox, while Chesterton disavowed any love of the thing for its own sake; paradox was in the nature of things and there was no harm in pointing it out at convenient intervals. Such is my impression of a desultory newspaper discussion half in jest.

A book has already been written on Chesterton as a Laughing Prophet. It was his laughter that enraged the monumental mausoleums of erudition, but Chesterton understood the very core of the matter; what is so beautifully stated in Maurice Hewlett's *Apologue*, how Truth, a naked lady expelled from cities, as they had no use for truth, nor any room, takes shelter in a poor man's hovel and bears him two children, a jester and a poet. So let no don, or conspiracy of dons, rob Chesterton of his motley. He uses his enormous sense of fun in defence of truth, and this put at a disadvantage those enemies of truth whose strong point was their lack of humour. Now what is truth? said jesting Pilate. The deep says it is not in me, and death and hell say we have heard tell.

To the remote ineffectuals of the opening 20th century, if Chesterton had attacked their position as ponderously as they defended it, it would have looked like a compliment, but as for cutting capers round it, who could bear that? Not even a defective sense of humour. Thus paradox became the critics' cant.

Now the defendant delves a yard below their mines. His appeal is first to minor logic and then to major logic, and the effect on us old students is to renew our youth; would that God the gift had gi'en us in our trying time to see the value of this despised estate. But our professors on their watch-towers could only quote one another for ever. And as it were by accident, an occasional ray of suggestion about predicates univocal, equivocal or analogical would sometimes percolate our raw apprehension. Here behold the key to Chesterton and his paradox. We are not so constituted as to see things in their essence, but only to deduce them from their accidents. Therefore we must walk warily and speak circumspectly or else Chesterton will lay us booby traps, for he of all men since Thomas Aquinas had intuition of the thing in itself and he talks accordingly. Not that he angelically sees the essence of a thing but in his lighthearted and childish way suspects and always suspected much more than meets the eye, for the soul of Chesterton never lost its birthright of apprehending the soul of things. Tons of baby-talk conceal this in his writing and when he dons his singing robe it flowers into paradox.

This is a grand beginning of the many times projected anthology of Chesterton which his wife long ago tried out, and which she called the Chesterton Calendar.

In one passage it is suggested that he knew better than he wrote.

His amanuenses were aware, I know, of whole tracts of thought stretching out behind the dictated words, and by process of major logic Hugh Kenner has discovered this. Man is a rational animal, says Aristotle. Man is not a reasoning animal, but a seeing animal, says Newman. Hurrah, says Chesterton, and Hear-hear says the present volume. Incidentally many good aphorisms may be noted. What is reasoning, anyhow, but a hop from the self-evident to the less obvious by ladders of analogy?

JOHN O'CONNOR.

SELECTED ESSAYS OF HILAIRE BELLOC. With an introduction by J. B. Morton. (Methuen; 10s. 6d.)

In his introduction to these essays Mr Morton finds their merit to lie in the variety of subjects about which Mr Belloc can write and criticises those who want their favourite authors to do the same thing over and over again. He says Mr Belloc has done so many different things with his pen. True in one sense and yet in another we may say that in these essays he has done one thing only that matters and that is to write English which will be read with joy both by those who are repeating the experience and by those who come to it for the first time. Mr Belloc is read and will be read for the sheer joy of it regardless of the subject on which he writes. It is true that the style as well as the wide variety of themes could come only from a vigorous and well stocked mind, but that we realise only by reflection. It is the writing itself which possesses that quality of fullness which gives such satisfaction to the mind; so often and rightly compared to the pleasure afforded to the body by good wine. It has been said of Mr Belloc that he wrote prose that could and should be spoken. Often the full flavour of his style can only be enjoyed to the full by hearing it. In these days when almost everyone can read it can be forgotten that words are primarily for the ear and not for the eye. There is no one left to listen.

Mr Morton's introduction is itself an admirable piece of work and it is difficult to refrain from quoting from it at length. He is especially good on the elements of lucidity and vitality in Mr Belloc's writing. No doubt it is the sympathy which exists between Beachcomber and Belloc in the mutual 'hatred of pretentiousness hypocrisy and priggishness' and their common desire to use the power of words against these things which make the one write so well concerning the other.

The selection of essays is arbitrary, as by the nature of the case it must be. It is a good one. The juxtaposition of the essay on 'Irony' and that entitled 'Achmet Boulee Bey' is a delightful touch. Still, we miss others, such as 'The Good and the Bad Poet'.

Those of us who recall the joy and satisfaction we had on reading the volumes from which these essays are culled will rejoice for our