

biography, all the more effective because of the directness and restraint of his style. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate states in his foreword that Mr Shaw has written 'a most entrancing story which should attract a wide circle of readers'. But apart from the general reader there is much in this of interest to all who are concerned with bettering the lot of our less fortunate brothers. It is a good thing for us all to have a glimpse of what life is like for a child on the edge of starvation and with a drunken father—what it is like to leave the fresh air and healthy (though cruelly under-paid) life of a farm for the horrors of work at the coal-face, driven by economic necessity to continue at a job one detests until failing health prevents one from earning one's livelihood.

His life at the (now defunct) Feltham Industrial School is of more historic value, for the modern Home Office School is a very different thing—and children of 10, without previous convictions, are no longer sent away for six years for selling matches in the snowy streets. But it is as well that the rigour and, at times, brutality of that system of 'reform' for the young offender should be more widely known, for there are still plenty among us who deplore the 'softness' of our present treatment of child delinquents, and advocate a return to former practice. Let them read carefully 'Guttersnipe's' experiences and those of his companions (including a boy of 12, publicly flogged on his bare back for absconding, until the chaplain stopped the punishment because the child had lost consciousness) so that they really understand to what they would have us return.

Dust-jacket 'blurbs' are notoriously eccentric, but in this case one is left guessing. What is meant by this sentence?—'The author writes of the stigma which inevitably attached to this humane system of preventive delinquency and to the victimisation which in the bad old days usually followed'. What on earth is 'preventive delinquency'? Is this a curious misprint for '*preventing* delinquency'? But why should the system be described on the jacket as 'humane', when the whole tenor of the book shows that it is not? These are mysteries which one reader at least cannot solve.

H. GRANT SCARFE

THE CYCLES OF THE KINGS. By Myles Dillon (Cumberlege; Oxford University Press; 10s. 6d.)

The Irish sagas are among the splendours of European literature. In this book Professor Dillon has selected from among them those that have for their heroes the kings and dynasts and legendary characters of Irish history from the third century to the eleventh. He has translated some of the tales anew and has partly translated partly summarised others. His main purpose, he explains, is to serve the general English reader by giving him easier access to a rewarding literature. But the notes and critical apparatus are for students and scholars, and they are precise, suggestive and informative—and, on the whole, conservative. Students of comparative literature will also

be indebted to Professor Dillon, both for his translations and for pertinent footnotes and comments. His selection is sound; his own English, whether rendering prose or verse, is appropriately terse and concrete. He tends to claim too little merit rather than overmuch for his material, and he has a scholar's modesty of statement.

Professor Dillon indicates three points of contact between these tales and the Welsh *Mabinogi*. Strangely, he omits to refer to the most important correspondence: the story of Mongan has a number of parallels with the tales of Pwyll in the Welsh Four Branches, as indeed Professor W. J. Gruffydd observed long ago. For the general reader it may be well to remark that these stories do not however belong to an exclusive 'Celtic' world. There never was any exclusive Celtic culture. The filid of Ireland shared in the culture of Europe, not merely the folk-culture, but the literary also. There are classical echoes in these sagas. Here, for example, is the Irish in Professor Dillon's translation:

The Leinstermen came to meet Fergal and the battle was joined, and it was the fiercest that ever was fought in Ireland till then. Colum Cille did not aid the Ui Neill, for he saw Brigid above the Leinster army terrifying the army of Leth Cuinn. It was indeed the sight of her that caused the defeat of Fergal. . . .

It seems a plain and daring reminiscence of the great passage in the second book of the *Aeneid* where the goddess mother points out to her son:

Iam summas arces Tritonia, respice, Pallas

Insedit, nimbo effulgens et Gorgone salva.

The filid of Ireland drank from the same fountain as Racine in the same Noble Castle.

SAUNDERS LEWIS

THE APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE. By C. C. Torrey (Yale University Press; Cumberlege; 20s.)

An introduction and guide to the 'outside books' or non-canonical Jewish religious literature is certainly a desideratum, for all serious students of Scripture need to find their way among such books and will profit much from knowing them. Professor Torrey has written such a guide, a useful handbook with apt references and bibliographies. In his General Introduction the author sketches (chiefly with reference to the Reformed Churches) the history and varying fortunes of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and argues for the abolition of the latter term: with this we can have no quarrel. Nor can we expect the author to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent on the canon of Sacred Scripture, so that not a few of the inspired books are, to him, 'apocrypha'. But we are surprised to find that he associates the terms protocanonical and deutero-canonical with not-quite-orthodox tendencies. He has yet to understand that they are perfectly compatible with the decrees of Trent, and are part of the everyday terminology of Catholic manuals.