

personally, God died. Yet within his realization of the need of the Church to be independent of the idolatry of any temporal system, and his sense of the necessity for a living dialogue with real people, a dialogue characterized by intense interest and passionate love, a solution may well lie. The harsh, carping apologetic of Veuillot, for all its human cleverness, is worse than useless in

the new world: the values of the Gospel have to be demonstrated as valid in post middle-class society and in this task the example of Lacordaire is surely not without value, with his intense faith in the power of grace and his belief that contemporary man can hear the gospel. *J'espère mourir en religieux pénitent et en libéral impénitent.*

Ian Hislop, O.P.

VICTORIA R.I., by Elizabeth Longford; *Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 63s.*

Queen Victoria was an expert at brinkmanship and part of the fascination of this massive biography lies in the constant tension, domestic and political, that the old lady created around her. For it is the Victoria of the long widowhood and the Jubilees who haunts the imagination, rather than the ardent and prolific wife whose career was cut short by the death of Prince Albert. Until her own death nearly forty years later, bemoaning her poor health and lonely helplessness, she dealt faithfully with Palmerston, Gladstone, Disraeli, Salisbury, Joseph Chamberlain, Wilhelm II, Bismarck, Cecil Rhodes and her enormous family connections with nearly every European court.

Lady Longford has achieved such a splendid portrait that it is a compliment to list a few shortcomings. She is scarcely fair to Disraeli. She does not emphasize Prince Albert's success, an exaggerated one, perhaps, in instilling conscientiousness into the lively Hanoverian he married; the Queen's hours at the desk were crushing – the old lady returned from a Darmstadt wedding to find twenty-three despatch-boxes waiting for her. The concentration of the study on the personality of Victoria leaves room only for sketches of the surrounding figures. The atmosphere and material progress of the reign get cursory allusions.

That being said, it remains to express gratitude to Lady Longford for such a comprehensive and sympathetic survey. She has had some new and valuable material to draw upon while her own liberal and catholic mind has added dimensions to a portrait whose main traits have long been familiar. Queen Victoria's religious opinions and attitudes are discussed and shown, not surprisingly but refreshingly, to have been honest and realistic. The relationships with John Brown and other familiars are sensibly ventilated. The Queen's attitude to the future Edward VII appears more appreciative than accepted legend allows. We get glimpses of the gaiety, broad humour and charm she could display and which explain why the long years of service of Sir Henry Ponsonby and others were not impossibly purgatorial.

Anyone must be intrigued by such an intimate study of the workings of Court and Cabinet. But Victoria had an indefinable genius, despite her obstinate seclusion, for transcending the limits of class and colour. Lady Longford suggests very plausibly that the Queen's dislike for Gladstone was largely because he was a popular father-figure rivalling her own matriarchy over the ordinary people of the country, with whom she felt, often correctly, at one. We learn, too, how she detested colour-bars, and, indeed, was so

far in advance in this respect of her entourage and advisers that her initiatives were lost, disastrously, in the insensitive decades that followed her death. We have abundant evidence of the shock that death was to so many who

identified the Queen with the country but it was a measure of what her integrity had achieved that her land survived Victoria.

*Paul Foster, O.P.*

UNFINISHED BUSINESS, by Maisie Ward; *Sheed and Ward, 40s.*

Perhaps only an egotist, or one with a strong streak of egotism, can produce a perfect self-portrait: only Narcissus looking into the pool can find himself entrancing and reproduce his reflection with delight. Maisie Ward's autobiography, like G. K. Chesterton's, gives no very vivid picture of the central figure, except perhaps during childhood and youth in a leisured and intelligent Catholic family with leisured and intelligent Catholic cousins all over England. As she matured the first satisfaction in the mere process of living evaporated, leisure began to turn brown at the edges, and a feeling of aimlessness developed. This was ended by World War I, which brought to her, as to many young Englishwomen hitherto netted like peaches ripening against a sunny wall, the glorious necessity of action. Her pent-up energy was never again unused. She nursed the wounded. Presently she was speaking for the Catholic Evidence Guild (which began in Hyde Park and spread to Birmingham, Liverpool, Sydney, New York), working with teachers, charwomen, typists, nurses and scientists, and learning much both from them and from her audiences. The necessity to be absolutely clear and precise was emphasized by such curious comments as 'You'll never convince *me* that your Pope is God'.

In this work she met her husband. Their

marriage led to the foundation of Sheed and Ward, happy co-operation with such brilliant writers as Christopher Dawson, Ronald Knox, C. C. Martindale and E. I. Watkin, a voyage to extend the firm's activities to America, and friendship with Dorothy Day of the House of Hospitality. Family life with two children continued triumphantly through years of incessant work, farming on distributist principles, travelling, writing books in hotels and waiting-rooms, and lecturing here, there and everywhere, which she found stimulating rather than exhausting. There is an interesting chapter on the priest-worker tragedy – the rise of the movement in sacrificial hope and its disintegration in a sharp conflict of loyalties between the kingdom of God and the triumph of the proletariat. There is also, in complete contrast, a melancholy picture of Hilaire Belloc, chiefly in his old age, the fullness and fire of his middle years faded away. There was more to him than appears here: a spirit clear and true as his voice, an immediate goodness, a genius.

*Unfinished Business*, it will be plain leaves a sense of innumerable meetings and friendships, immense well-spent energy, ceaseless achievements still fermenting in the world.

*Renée Haynes*