

## *Blackfriars*

practical detachment from creatures without theoretical violence to their intrinsic worth—the crude antithesis between the infinite and finite of the second-rate spiritual book. And although the stress is more on personal invulnerability than on the gallant service of God, I hope it will not embarrass Mr. Morgan to be told that his last novel is substantially a piece of Thomism.

N.W.T.G.

LOST LECTURES. By Maurice Baring. (London: Peter Davies; 10/6.)

In this collection of essays, to which he gives the sub-title, *The Fruits of Experience*, Mr. Baring is not unconcerned with much that is modern in art and literature, but for the most part he treats of a period which the modern generation has only just learnt to regard with equanimity—the last twenty years or so of the reign of Queen Victoria. Mr. Baring writes of his own experiences; of men and women and books and places that have influenced his life. A wide and tolerant culture has enabled him to keep in touch with a vastly changed world. Indeed some will inevitably quarrel with the tolerance that he extends to modern art and literature, but it is this which has enabled him to see the world of thirty years ago in perspective.

There are no politics in this book. There is an essay on Diplomacy, but the strained relations that existed from time to time between France and England in the nineties only enter in so far as they made conversation difficult in Parisian society. We are concerned with the amenities of life—looks, and plays, and music, and good talk. After describing the somewhat chill experience of life at an 'advanced' prep. school, two 'advanced' prep. schools in fact, Mr. Baring brings home to us the comforting truth that it is possible to get all that is best out of the spacious life of Eton and the Universities, and the off moments from a crammer's in London, without having got one's colours at either cricket or football, or gaining any sort of a Blue, or winning the Craven, or taking a first in Mods., or being a potential Viceroy of India. Though in a subsequent essay on *Stimulants* we learn something of the calibre of a man who could correspond adequately to the stimulus provided by Mrs. Warre-Cornish, the wife of the Vice-Provost of Eton, and Vernon Lee.

There are countless things in these essays which give matter for discussion, and countless pleasant little surprises, like the sudden introduction to Mr. Hilary Belloc. We had always known him as Hilaire before. We hardly recognised him.

## Book Reviews

Amongst other things it is interesting to find an essay on Pushkin by one who can read him in the original. To those of us who are inclined to regard the adulation of Russian literature with suspicion it is reassuring to learn that Pushkin really was a great poet, whether or no he were among the greatest. It is interesting to learn, too, how much he was influenced by Byron.

In the essay called *Punch and Judy* Mr. Baring discusses the perennial question of how to satisfactorily produce a play (Mr. Baring likes split infinitives). Most people will readily agree with him that the purpose of scenery is not served by trying to create the illusion of reality. They will concede, too, in general that 'the play is the thing,' but many will be found to contest the fact that a play can act itself. However real may be the danger that the personality of a great actor will overlay the part that he is playing most people will prefer to see a great part greatly played. Failing this the preferable alternative is to read it for oneself—Charles Lamb's way out of the difficulty.

Mr. Baring has some penetrating remarks on both high-brows and low-brows, but let anyone who doubts the equipoise of his own artistic judgments note the following comment on the love-sick maidens in *Patience*. 'The twenty love-sick maidens are with us still. They read Freud and they paint cubes, and listen with rapture to the music of Scriabin, and the more unintelligible they find it the better they like it. This doesn't at all mean that the art that they admire is sham, any more than the art of Whistler and Rossetti was sham in the eighties, but it means that every school of art has always had, and always will have, foolish disciples who imitate and exaggerate the faults of the master without being able to emulate his excellencies.'

F.G.S.

THE VEIL OF VERONICA. By Gertrud von Le Fort. Translated by Conrad M. R. Bonacina. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

The publishers claim so much for this book that at first I was daunted in criticising it: perhaps it is entirely a matter of taste and that they are right in thinking it a work of 'faultless art'; I can only disagree. To begin with, I find little of the conflict between 'the majesty of paganism and the intimate life of grace' that I looked for in the heroine's mind and soul; her ebullitions of Roman rhapsodies, obscured by abstract gropings, suggest no difficulty about materialism and still less about paganism. In fact, as far as *Veronica* is concerned, I see no