

BLACKFRIARS

well-known people, others of those of little fame. They are like so many flies living for ever in a great block of amber. Editors, from Croker to Birkbeck Hill, have dealt with them generously in biographical footnotes. But the compiler of *Who's Who in Boswell* aims at supplying the student with notices of an ampler and more ambitious kind. He has devoted some years to perfecting his idea, and this large and handsomely produced volume is the result. The work is well done and the biographies are very readable. The plan of the book, however, is somewhat odd. There are 366 pages, and for every day of the year (including February 29th) there is intended to be a *Life* of someone who has figured in the Johnsonian circle or on its fringe and who is mentioned in Boswell. However, the design is not fully carried out, for there are not 366 biographical subjects presented, and some thirty to forty pages are filled up with odds and ends of information, interesting enough but somewhat of an excrescence. Surely the original conception could have been adhered to! There are dozens of characters in Boswell who go without notice in the present work, e.g. Miss Hill, Boothby, the Abbé Hooke, M^{de}me. de Boufflers, Père Boscovich, Messenger Mounsey, Sir George Staunton, and Saunders Welch, concerning all of whom ample material can be found. Still we are grateful for what the editor has given us, and his labours will be of use to those who have not the D.N.B. or an encyclopædia at hand. We have noticed a few errors here and there: Boswell's son did not "succeed to the title of Lord Auchinleck," as that was the quite personal judicial style of his grandfather and not a peerage; Miss Burney was never a "Maid of Honour," but something entirely different; the place in Worcestershire where Dr. Johnson was "disappointed of hospitality" was not the seat of Lord Lyttelton but of another member of the family; and the Thanksgiving for the recovery of George III's health did not take place on the date stated, but in 1789.

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.

THE TREMBLING OF THE SEA. A Novel. By Barbara Lucas.
(Constable; 7/6.)

If one is left a little dissatisfied with this book it is because the best wine is served first. But the best wine is good. The personal and Communist story of Chris and Bill in London is amazingly well done. From the opening scene of a "propaganda ride" in the Harrow Road district to the moment when these two part at Victoria Station, each with a sense of loss and escape, and an uneasy feeling that Communism is not enough, the author has completely succeeded. Character and incident fit together in a satisfying development, and the earnest young pagans, who might be so boring with their Left-Wing enthusiasms and im-

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mature passions, are amusing, exciting and quite convincing. Then Chris goes to Sussex and the story is not so good. One can hardly believe in her affection, superficial though it is, for the young Socialist prig. Nor can one believe in his suicide after the love episode.

But it is in the second part of the book that Miss Lucas is least convincing. Chris goes to Spain with her ideas and emotions in shreds. She "made no attempt to decide what she should do in the future, or what she would think politically. It gradually sank into her consciousness that she wasn't and never had been politically-minded. . . . Personal relationships and all the depth of feeling they stood for: that was primarily what she wanted." The Communist Bill is in America and his place is taken by the Catholic Peter. The contrast of these two men and their effect on the delightful and utterly sincere Chris is deliberate. The book is Catholic propaganda. And that unfortunately is its failure. Communism in the Harrow Road seems much more human and desirable than Catholicism in Burleigh Street, and one is almost glad when Bill suddenly reappears and drags Chris off for an immoral excursion to the Lakes. Bill may not have grown up and his paganism may begin to pall, but he is real, he is flesh and blood, and Peter Strong is not. Peter Strong is intellectual Catholicism with a charming manner.

Nevertheless, Miss Lucas has written a very good book; her dialogue is a joy; her character drawing nearly always excellent. There is a fresh, clean, honest quality in her work which more than compensates for its minor faults. And if it fails as Catholic propaganda it is a brave failure.

LAURENCE OLIVER.

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND OTHER ESSAYS.
By F. M. Powicke. (Oxford University Press; 10/-.)

All mediævalists will welcome this collection of Essays by the Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford. It consists of eight papers, written at different times and for various occasions. Most of them have already appeared in reviews; but many are almost inaccessible. All have lasting value. These essays are linked by a common purpose, for all illustrate problems in the life of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. Like all the other works of the Regius Professor, they make a most fascinating and singularly sympathetic and stimulating study; and, as we would expect from such a distinguished historian, they all bear the mark of that sound scholarship and finesse which we admire so much in him. The story of *Loretta, Countess of Leicester*, not only involves minute investigation but