

## R E V I E W S

REDBRICK AND THESE VITAL DAYS. By Bruce Truscot. (Faber; 10s. 6d.).

"Bruce Truscot's" identity remains a secret, but this new book will add to his reputation. *Redbrick University* was generally allowed to be a competent and responsible piece of work, and now the same qualities are displayed again on a wider field and with a sharper point and purpose. The author's competence indeed is so obvious and his bent so practical that his outlook can hardly fail to be a factor in the changes our system of higher education is likely to undergo in the near future. His name is sure to count, his views to be quoted, and these, being clearly set out (as befits a professional teacher) are very quotable. But they are the views of a professional upon his own professional world, and to weigh them accurately and in detail one would have to belong to that world. This review can only aim at a rough and ready estimate.

Assuming the division of the English Universities into "Ox-bridge" and "Redbrick" Mr. Truscot sets out, after a painfully facetious preface, to discuss "Redbrick's post-war problems". The status of Arts Courses; the shortage of teachers; broken traditions and lowered standards; plans and counter plans for state aid, for and against state control; inter-university contacts; curricula, numbers and staffing—all this is discussed of course in the light of the flood of Plans and Reports which have made 1944 the educational theorist's *annus mirabilis*: the Butler White Paper, the A.U.T. Report (Dec. 1943), the Norwood, Fleming and McNair Reports, the British Association Committee's Report. Most of this material is welcomed by Mr. Truscot. He sorts it out, assesses and judges it in detail and, in the main, favourably. With one eye on his ideal, another on practical possibilities, he seems to arrive at an unusually balanced and disinterested view of its drift and gist.

This sense of balance is worth stressing. Enthusiastic for "democracy" and almost wishfully ready to welcome change (he is not always incapable of claptrap, e.g. "education's most stubborn enemy—conservative tradition") Mr. Truscot yet keeps his head. Thus he wants Redbrick to play a much larger part in English life, but without sharing the A.U.T.'s hope that "all who can profit thereby" should go to a University; for he sees Redbrick as the upholder of standards which are inevitably critical and therefore exclusive. Again he resists the easy cry for "social service"; it is an excellent cry, but when it comes from the N.U.S. laying down, at its 1944 Congress, a communistic "fundamental premiss", Redbrick only listens at its peril. A University is not bound to justify itself to the political and economic world according to that world's standards. He resists the fashionable slighting of written work in favour of oral; and here, as in *Redbrick University*, he stands up for scholarship even of the "factual" sort.

This caution blends with a rare and true enthusiasm for knowledge and the life of enquiry; Mr. Truscot is a schoolmaster *corde et anima*. And, however vague his thought may appear to Catholics, he knows that the final *aim* of all learning is something eternal. He welcomes the Norwood Report's admission of values that are "final and binding for all times and in all places", and its sharp distinction of such values from the scope of the particular sciences, which cannot therefore "dictate aims" for education as a whole. He does not, of course, work this distinction out philosophically; yet he is, I think, a little too vague for his own purposes. In a *Scrutiny* review of *Redbrick University* Mr. L. C. Knights found Mr. Truscot's idea of a university—that universities exist by pursuing knowledge for its own "intrinsic value"—not "dynamic" enough, and he tried to supply a better one. In Mr. Knights's view the purpose of universities is to foster "a lively concern for civilised values", and knowledge is only one of these. The point—and here Mr. Knights's critique is very useful—is that the seekers of knowledge must be prepared to fight for men's right to seek it, and this requires that they hold a view of life as a whole, connecting bare knowledge explicitly with manners, morals and final beatitude, and coordinating the different kinds of knowledge so that they fall into a scale of greater and less importance. Otherwise one risks pursuing at best a mere abstract ideal, and, at worst, a vague aspiration. And in practice, as Mr. Knights point out, one risks leaving the running of universities to "practical" men while the pursuers of knowledge get on with their liberal education undisturbed and undisturbing; they would have "intrinsic values" for their portion but, without a coordinating philosophy, they would be unable either to think out or to impose in practical detail a graded intellectual discipline; they would fail in short to run their own show. For knowledge applies not only to life but to itself also; it can coordinate degrees of intellectual discipline not all of which have an equal "intrinsic value". The flaw in an "intrinsic value" theory such as Mr. Truscot relies upon is that it exalts knowledge in general without telling you enough about the value of particular branches of knowledge in the total scheme—about the place of each in the Civilisation for which Mr. Knights is prepared to fight, and in the approach to God to which the Church bears witness.

As a trained scholar in the field of literary history Mr. Knights brought damaging criticism to bear on the bibliographical "jumble of names" with the aid of which Mr. Truscot seems confident of guiding the young on the road to culture, and I think this passage from the volume under review gives out the same note of naive indiscrimination: "Here you have," says Mr. Truscot approvingly, "an undergraduate who, without neglecting set books and periods, uses his special studies to delve into philosophy, theology, educational theory, political science and so on; who reads widely in contemporary literature", etc. The "and so on" is surely re-

vealing. It is worth insisting that a university does not exist simply to give undergraduates a chance of picking up miscellaneous bits of "knowledge" and opinion (the resulting assortment being called a liberal education) but to provide a training in each discipline according to the part it plays in human life as a whole (Mr. Knights's "civilisation"). Mr. Truscot would, in general, no doubt agree; but his grip on the proper coordination of the disciplines intrinsic to liberal education is weak. He cannot guide us into all Redbrick's problems. With ways and means, with a host of items contained in the official reports, he is quite equipped to deal, and his instincts are right enough; but governing these particularities there is only, one feels, an ideal of knowledge *in abstracto* and a confused aspiration; and this probably is insufficient.

For Catholics this book raises particular problems by its double insistence upon (a) the continuity of Redbrick with English life as a whole and with preliminary schooling, and (b) the interconnexion and unification of all the Redbricks into a single intellectual élite "the chief educational force in the country". With (a) especially Mr. Truscot concerns himself, and what he says is well-informed and well-argued; but as he leaves us Catholics out of his reckoning (explicitly at one point) we can refrain from immediate comments and questions. Where he says he is *not* referring to us is in the first of two carefully critical chapters on Public Schools; but his remarks, or most of them, might very well have been addressed to us; we can hardly plead an *alibi*. But it is with respect to (b) that the chief difficulties are likely to arise, if as is probable, Mr. Truscot's hopes are going in the main to be realised: if Redbrick becomes a nation-wide system with organised contacts, transfers of staff and students, and inspection. The Newman Association, I suppose, is going to have plenty to do.

One closes the book with a feeling of gratitude. As a piece of writing it is rather undistinguished, but its conclusions are solid, discreet and reasonable to a degree not often attained. It always appeals to reason. It contains scores of remarks that were well worth making, much humane discernment and much shrewd moralising which hits hard and goes home and will be found healthily disturbing by many people not directly envisaged by it (see chapter 4: *The Leisured Professor at Bay*). KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

LA PHILOSOPHIE DE CLAUDE BERNARD. By A. D. Sertillanges, O.P. (Aubier 42 fr.).

Père Sertillanges, whose books it is good to have again in this country, here shows the aptness with which the Catholic doctrine of soul and body can meet modern physiological developments. It is his ably maintained contention, against those who have acclaimed the eminent French physiologist Claude Bernard a standard 19th century positivist, that not only his scientific findings but even the incidental philosophising into which he was led, demand a Thomistic setting. The assertion would no doubt have