

## REVIEWS

simply because when he had read it, he said with a grave look, 'That's telling secrets.' " The work in question was Patmore's *Sponsa Dei*, an elaboration in prose of the idea which grew out of certain of his poems: "The relation of the soul to Christ as his betrothed wife." Now Hopkins has been blamed as being responsible for the destruction of the MS., but, as Professor Abbot points out in his Introduction, Patmore did not burn the MS. until two years after the remark made by G.M.H. "He had thus more than two years in which to reflect and make up his mind, and since Patmore was Patmore, the essence of arrogant individuality, we must assume that, though no doubt he pondered the words of Hopkins, he burned the manuscript because he himself was convinced that he ought to burn it." Moreover, Patmore in his letter to Bridges was quite likely to exaggerate the effect of Hopkins' conversation, for he was writing to the dead priest's great friend, and praising the deceased from a full heart. All that Professor Abbott has to say on this subject is a satisfactory solution of this episode in the friendship of the two poets.

There are eight illustrations in this volume. Three are of Hopkins—in one he is in fancy-dress—taken before his reception into the Church. All, I think, are hitherto unpublished photographs. Another illustration is a delicate drawing of trees, executed by Hopkins when he was a young man.

Hopkins the lover of nature reveals himself in a letter to Baillie, written in his twentieth year: "I think I have told you that I have particular periods of admiration for particular things in Nature; for a certain time I am astonished at the beauty of a tree, shape, effect, etc., then when the passion, so to speak, has subsided, it is consigned to my treasury of explored beauty, and acknowledged with admiration and interest ever after, while something new takes its place in my enthusiasm." From that treasury Hopkins drew all his life and enriched his poems with the rarest images of nature.

H. K. L'ESTRANGE, S. J.

CONSTANTIN LEONTIEFF: Un penseur religieux russe du dix-neuvième siècle. Par Nicolas Berdiaeff. Traduit per Hélène Iswolsky. (*Les Iles*.) (Desclée de Brouwer; 25 frs.)

This study will be of most interest to those already familiar with the background of Leontiev's life, with Soloviev and Dostoievsky and the political and religious tendencies of their

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times. But it has a much wider appeal. For Leontiev's life is the history of a secular struggle. The story indeed is fascinating for a multitude of reasons; for his clairvoyance with regard to the future, his anticipation of Spengler by fifty years, his foreseeing of fascism and communism and world revolution; for his hatred, out of due time, for so much that his century hailed as the new enlightenment and that many to-day are viewing with more jaundiced eye; for his "solitariness," his uniqueness, the suspicion with which his *aristocratism* viewed anything approaching egalitarianism, socialism, the levelling process, even the Christian version of man's equality; for his estheticism—in which there is little that resembles the English phenomenon of the 90's—with its ruthlessness, its stark dualism, its refusal to pray for the coming of the Kingdom, since the triumph of Light would mean the loss of the *chiaroscuro* of life.

But it is the peculiar sharpness and relentlessness of the struggle between his estheticism and his religion, the love of beauty, the fear of hell, which is of greatest moment; a struggle which never left him, and which he never resolved. Beauty is the one end of life; "a single century-old tree is more precious than twenty mediocre men"; "liberty, total equality of rights, are nothing but a way of preparing the coming of Anti-Christ," are symptoms of final decay; not humanitarianism but ruthlessness in the service of earthly beauty; this is one side of the picture. And then, in opposition, the element of religious fear, of death and of hell; a deep conviction, but harsh: "he could never become wholly Christian. He never managed to overcome in himself the spirit of the Old Testament and of the Law. His attitude towards life was not that of the Christian." His inner struggle leads him towards the monastic life, to complete submission of will; yet still he shocks his director by his love of contrast, his dangerous admirations, the presence side by side on his table of Proudhon and the Prophet David, of Byron and Chrysostom.

It is an absorbing and a tragic story. Leontiev failed to achieve the unity, in face of earthly and heavenly beauty, without which the soul cannot be made whole; he "cannot, and ought not, to be a master for anyone"; but that is not to say that we have nothing to learn from him: "*il agit sur notre pensée comme un puissant stimulant, et il lui donne maintes impulsions spirituelles.*"

GERALD VANN, O.P.