

there are freedmen buried in the cemetery, and one family, the Aelii Tyranni, record that they were of Caesar's household, and perhaps made their fortune there in the department of the Privy Purse. But there was an influx of families with Greek *cognomina* into the senate and the high administration both under Hadrian and under the Severi, and, as Professor Syme has recently emphasized, these were often recruited from local dynasts or rich traders in the Levant. The Ulpii and Aelii of the Vatican cemetery must have gained full citizen rights under Trajan or Hadrian but not necessarily enfranchisement. In contrast to those on the Isola Sacra, the tombs on the Vatican seemed to me to belong to families of wealth and fashion.

This makes still more remarkable Constantine's action in desecrating them to form the foundations of his new Basilica. There must have been an urgent cause not only for the choice of such a site but for the orientation of the building. Perhaps, like that on Calvary, it was designed to cover the traditional site of an execution as well as a traditional grave.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

HISTORY IN A CHANGING WORLD. By Geoffrey Barraclough. (Blackwell; 18s.)

Professor Barraclough has long held a recognized position among English historians gained by the wide range of his interests, the challenging originality of his thought and by his concise and vivid prose. All these qualities are apparent in his *History in a Changing World*, a collection of articles and lectures for the most part already published but now re-issued linked together in a single volume.

It is perhaps the penalty of his originality of mind and of his power of incisive assertion that all his life he has had critics among his colleagues and that their number seems to be steadily on the increase. The present volume will provide them with much fresh ammunition: it contains so many assertions that are not tenable. It is not tenable that St Ambrose was filled with antipathy to Roman traditions (p. 36); even a reading of the *De Officiis* would show that his thought was moulded by that of Cicero and Seneca. It is not correct that 'it would be hard to show that the course of the Renaissance was accelerated or directly influenced by the fall of Constantinople' (p. 132); it could be done by a very brief consideration of the household of Cardinal Bessarion and of the influence of the disciples of Gemistos Plethon. It cannot be maintained that with the sole exception of Novgorod 'the towns played no part in Russian life' during the late medieval period (p. 189). The rise of Moscow would be sufficient answer; but all medieval Russian history seems to follow the pattern first set at Kiev, the importance of the prince

rising and falling with the importance of his town, and the importance of the town largely determined by fluctuating trade routes.

These are three examples chosen from among many. Yet it would be grossly unjust to concentrate on such criticisms. So many of the assumptions challenged by Professor Barraclough have long needed to be challenged even if his counter-assertions seem at times too sweeping. And the volume contains sections like that on the medieval empire which could have been written by no other historian in England.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

THE BISHOP WITH 150 WIVES. By F. X. Gsell. (Angus Robertson; 12s. 6d.)

The startling title—in yellow letters on a purple ground—instantly captures the eye and the imagination. Can the book live up to our startled expectations? The sub-title discloses that it is the account of fifty years as a missionary. There is no doubt that it will be edifying, but will it also be interesting? These reminiscences of the eighty-three year-old Bishop F. X. Gsell are recounted in conversational style and are completely captivating. And it is quite true that he had a hundred and fifty wives. Not, indeed, that he married them. As His Holiness the Pope observed when told of this unusual achievement: 'Oui, je comprends. Vous les achetez pour les délivrer.'

Bishop Gsell, a native of Alsace-Lorraine, spent his missionary life among the aborigines of the Northern Territory of Australia. He tells the story of his life-work as a missionary and not as an ethnologist. Incidentally, though, he gives the reader a remarkable amount of information about the tribal customs and practices of these primitive peoples. Concerning the spectacular number of his 'wives' Mgr Gsell explains that 'among the aborigines, a woman is born "married", and from the moment of her birth she belongs, as a chattel, to her mother's son-in-law who has been appointed as such by the tribe. It was from these sons-in-law that I bought the little girls, and not from their fathers.' These children were educated by the Sisters at the Mission until they were eighteen when, as free women, they could choose to return to their tribe.

The venerable author has a sharp word for those who disapprove of missionary activity. 'We do not forget', he comments pithily, 'that these fine talkers, few of whom have given the subject any deep thought, themselves enjoy the benefits of Christian civilization; and they enjoy this security because, in days of old, missionaries brought these benefits to their forefathers. The heathens are men as we are men and, as such, they have the same right that we have to the benefits of Christianity.' A biographic sketch of the Bishop by Père André Dupeyrat concludes these impressive reminiscences.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.