

that everything possible is being done, and that the public conscience may rest in peace. Not everyone will agree with some of Dr. McNally's strictures; but he has put forward and well argued a case that demands an answer.

OLDER PEOPLE

Mr. Hector Bolitho has chosen his title—**OLDER PEOPLE** (Cobden-Sanderson, 10s. 6d.)—because, during the twelve years which have passed since first he came to England from his native New Zealand, a young man chafing at the rawness of colonial life, his work has brought him into contact principally with men and women of the older generations. They have been kind to him in various ways, and from them he has "drawn confidence and help." What he has written is partly autobiography, an account of the reactions of a young New Zealander to the long-established civilizations of Europe, and partly a series of character sketches of the "Older People" he has known.

The quality of the book varies considerably. At times the author's attitude is too devoutly admiring, and his style too deliberate in its simplicity. Of Mr. Lloyd George, of Dr. Inge, of Lord Reading and of Signor Mussolini he does not succeed in telling us much. With Miss Marie Tempest, whom for awhile he tried to help in the writing of her autobiography, he is not much more successful, descriptively and analytically; but he does recount from her telling two amusing scenes, one of her first singing lesson with Garcia, and the other of Mr. Gladstone's attempt to dissuade her from going upon the stage:—

Miss Tempest was taken in a hansom cab to No. 10, Downing Street. Mrs. Gladstone raised her mitted hands in horror when Marie Tempest's grandmother told her story. "Not the stage, oh not the stage!" she cried. "I must ask William to speak to her." Then the great man came into the room, and he talked of the theatre. At first, he forgot his mission. He talked of the Greek drama, of the Monkish Mysteries and Moralities and of the Restoration drama and then, at the end, he deplored the advent of women on the stage.

Mrs. Gladstone beamed. "William, you are wonderful." But the moral of the lecture was lost on the child and only the memory of Gladstone's charm and voice remained.

But if Mr. Bolitho records only the obvious or the trivial in some of his character studies, he also writes many that are both lively and full of observation.

In 1933 the author went to stay in Trans-Jordan as the guest of the Amir Abdullah, brother of the late King Feisal. He was proposing to write a life of their father, King Hussein. For some unexplained reason the project was abandoned; but the visit gave him material (partly in the form of quotations from a journal kept at the time) for his most interesting chapter. It is one full of amusing stories and vivid incidents, as, for example, the nerve-racking moment when a hospitable Arab host handed Mr. Bolitho the eyes of a sheep—"globular, warm and horrible"—as the most honourable tit-bit at a feast.

The book ends with the author's (presumably temporary?) return to New Zealand, and the realization that "the irritation and superciliousness which caused him to dislike the colony in which he was born have passed away. He has come to the state of being able to love men for what they are, instead of despising them for what they lack." England could scarcely give an author a better gift than such a change of heart.

GARDENING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

No one even glancingly acquainted with Mr. H. E. Bates's writing can have needed to await his **FLOWERS AND FACES** (Golden Cockerel Press; edition limited to 325 signed copies, 42s.) to be made aware of his instinctive devotion to its primary subject; for he has published no novels, and few short stories, which fail to manifest his delight in the multifarious blossoms, large and small, proud and humble, rare and common, of garden, field and wood. His books are indeed their perpetual celebration. Whether ardent gardeners be born or made, Mr. Bates, by sure instinct or great endeavour, would have his place among them.

The easier path, it seems from these pages, was his. His ancestors, he records, were "extremely humble and half-literate people of the country working class," but they brought him a great heritage—the intuitive love and understanding of birds and flowers.

At least if they were not gardeners especially they were open-air men, men of the earth and the countryside; farmers, fishermen, bird-lovers, butterfly-hunters, bird-stuffers, poachers, mushroomers, field-rovers, most of them men without fixed jobs, restless men who were forever mooching about the countryside for flowers or birds or moths or for nothing at all but the sheer joy of roaming about in freedom under the open sky.

A few of these he briefly sketches, seen through the glowing mist of boyhood memory. He tells too of his father's and his great-grandmother's gardens, minute between shadowing walls but ever bright with flowers, and pays a national tribute which is worth repeating:—

The English are often too much criticized for their indifference to art or wine or food or good cooking, or for the lack of some virtue to which they are constitutionally foreign, but it seems to me that they are never praised enough for the greatest of their virtues, their great love of flowers, for the indomitable passion and desire for colour and blossom which asserts itself wherever they are.

By such a course he comes at last to his own quest for a garden, his purchase and restoration of an old granary in Kent, and his bringing into being out of new, unbroken but miraculous soil a happy acre of beds and borders, lawns and rock-garden; and how, when that was done, ambition drew him onward to create a further formal garden complete with lily-pool. All this is told quite

briefly, in a bare forty pages. Yet if brief it is not only beautifully presented—with a title-page and four engravings by Mr. John Nash, admirable in themselves if a little over-austere for the general spirit of the book—but also beautifully written.

LONDON FOR DICKENS LOVERS

One quotation cannot be resisted; Mr. William Kent's knowledge of Dickens's London is "extensive and peculiar." Indeed, his erudition as shown in **LONDON FOR DICKENS LOVERS** (Methuen, 3s. 6d.) would be almost overwhelming were it not that he wears it lightly. He is not of the school of passionate identifiers, though he admits to a little sadness in not knowing precisely where in the neighbourhood of the Monument stood Todger's. He rambles pleasantly through London, quoting freely and suggesting now and then a source of some Dickens incident. By way of example there was in 1830 a gentleman of Norfolk Street, Strand (where Mrs. Lirriper lived) who was just going to be married when the bride changed her mind. He locked up the room in which the wedding breakfast was laid out, and never allowed it to be entered save by the rats and mice who ate up the cake. In him may be found a possible original for Miss Havisham.

Mr. Kent points out that the London of which Dickens wrote was chiefly the London of his boyhood; that was the capital on which he lived. He made it lovable for other people and yet he did not love it himself as Lamb loved the Temple; it might be old and romantic, but he longed to sweep it away if it was uncomfortable for poor people to live in. His view of the inns in general was that of Joe Gargery about Barnard's: "I wouldn't keep a pig in it myself not in the case that I wished him to fatten wholesome and eat with a meller flavour on him." As to inns of another sort, he could make us devoted to the Maggie and Stump or the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, but he did not consciously invest them with the charm of his country inns. The fire never roared cheerfully up their chimneys as it did for Codlin and Short at the Jolly Sandboys or for Tom Smart in the shingle house on the edge of the Marlborough Downs. Sometimes it would almost seem that Dickens wanted us to think of London, as he did of Gray's Inn, "a stronghold of melancholy, . . . one of the most depressing institutions in brick and mortar known to the children of men." Yet, whatever he wanted, he made it far more magical than any other place he touched—because he had, in Mr. Lowten's phrase, the key of the street.

A PORTUGUESE POET

CONFUSÃO. Poemas por ADOLFO CASAIS MONTEIRO. (Coimbra: Edições Presença. 10 Escudos.)

POEMAS DO TEMPO INCERTO. Por ADOLFO CASAIS MONTEIRO. (Coimbra: Edições Presença. 7.50 Escudos.)

The genius of Portugal is essentially lyric in character; and if none of her greatest writers such as Gil Vicente, Camões, Castelo Branco or Eça de Queiroz was primarily a lyric poet, a strong lyrical vein runs through all their work and dominates that of lesser figures from the *trovadores* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to Antero de Quental and Eugénio de Castro in recent times. The two books of verse here reviewed establish Adolfo Casais Monteiro as the true lineal descendant of these forebears.

It is doubtless the Celtic strain in the race, coupled with the geographical environment of a rain-washed Atlantic coast, which has developed in the Portuguese outlook that wistful yearning called *saudade* which, indefinable in words, is so fully expressed by the haunting *fado* melodies of Coimbra. To these Senhor Monteiro has clearly not been deaf, and his *saudade* is true to type in combining nostalgia with profound discouragement and a resignation amounting almost to apathy. The poems in "Confusão" reveal a spirit tormented by conflicting tendencies. He is obsessed equally with the necessity for the pursuit of an ideal and with the horror of any finite destiny. He is both in search of his soul and in flight from it. His longing for the indefinable is thwarted by his aversion from the definite, and he is reduced to a nadir in which nothing is left but a numb nostalgia:

Nada existe, além desta
tristeza que nem me doi.
(Naught exists, beyond this
sadness which brings me not even pain.)

Although these lines sum up the content of the first volume, the poem in which they occur is to be found in the second, "Poemas do Tempo Incerto," which, however, is less exclusively esoteric in theme. In the modern world Senhor Monteiro finds the same conflicts and confusion as in himself. Being naturally static, he desires to be dynamic:

Eu que procuro a paz e a detesto
(I who seek peace and detest it)

he writes. But the mere canalization of his energies into some definite course suffices to rob him of all momentum. His poems become

Fluir de melodias buscando Américas
flutuar de ainda incertos cantos
amanha parados num gesto definido. . . .
(Floating melodies in search of El Dorado
a fluttering of still hesitant songs
frozen to-morrow in a definite gesture.)

Life and Letters has been purchased by the Brendin Publishing Company, who will henceforth issue it as a quarterly under the editorship of Robert Herring, of the *Manchester Guardian*, and Petrie Townshend. The paper will be called *Life and Letters To-day*, and the next number will appear in September.