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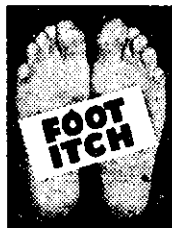


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BOOKS.

The Church of England

CROCKFORD PREFACES: the Editor Looks Back. Oxford University Press.

A GOOD item for a New Zealand quiz would be: "What is Crockford?" It would be a safe prediction that even among Anglicans many would not know the answer. *Crockford* is the directory of the Established Church of England and its offshoots overseas. It is an indication of the poverty of our own output in reference books—due to the smallness of our population—that if you seek certain information about New Zealand dioceses and parishes, the quickest way to get it is to look in *Crockford*.

But *Crockford* is more than a full directory of the Church of England. It is edited by a man with a mind of his own, who is accustomed to summarise, with comment, the outstanding events of the previous year. It is as if *Whitaker* or our own *Year-Book* were prefaced with a salty review of what had gone before. Twenty-two of these prefaces, from 1922 to the war years, have been issued in book form, and they make lively footnotes to church and social history in our time. There is nothing more English than the Church of England. In its spirit of compromise and building by bits and pieces, it is most characteristic of the community. At one end of the scale are the evangelicals, at the other the High Church party. A Roman Catholic bishop from overseas had this experience on arriving in London. Having been put down by his taxi-driver at what the man thought was the nearest Catholic Church, the Bishop entered, robed, and went up to the altar, and only when he saw that the service was in English did he realise that the church was Anglo-Catholic. There are, of course, complaints about ritual, but the Church manages to keep these clergy (or nearly all of them) in the fold. The Church will marry couples whose interest has been most perfunctory, and read the incomparable cadences of its burial service over men who had passed into scepticism or downright unbelief.

Such tolerance prevents many from breaking completely with the Church, but it is bad for discipline. Were all those who call themselves Anglicans to contribute regularly even a mite to the Church, its finances would be much healthier. "Three topics to which we recur continually," says the editor in his introduction to these prefaces, "are The Pensions Measure, The Supply of Candidates for Holy Orders, and The Financial Position of the Clergy." There is a widespread belief, which the editor is at pains to correct, that the Church of England is rich because it is a State church, and old ideas about overpaid clerics die hard. The truth is that, having regard to its great and increasing responsibilities, the Church is poor. Though there has been an improvement in recruiting in the last few years, the supply of candidates for ordination has not kept up with the Church's needs, and the editor says that if it had all the men required by the growth of population, it could not pay them. The average age of the clergy is disturbingly high. Most of the old anomalies in income have been removed, and not long ago it was estimated that only 5 per cent. of benefices were overpaid, "some to a very serious extent." On the other hand, 75 per cent. were underpaid. All

this must affect the direct work of the Church. And it is worth reflecting what the nation has owed to children of the vicarage, as in Scotland to children of the manse.

Through these prefaces runs another thread, the vital importance of the parish priest. What the editor thinks about this is well summed up in this passage, which also illustrates the independence of his thought and the effectiveness of his style. "We have also seen it stated that there must be more and yet more bishops 'to bring the Gospel to the people of England.' It might have been urged with equal force in March and April, 1918, that there must be a large increase in the number of General Officers that the first-line trenches might be held. The only people who can 'bring the Gospel to the people of England' effectively are the parochial clergy." They have more to do than take services. They must visit their flock regularly; and in their lives they must set an example. In many places this visitation cannot be done because there are not enough clergy.

There are many other quotable things, but we have room for only one or two. "If there is an element of truth in the saying 'A poor Church is a pure Church,' which we believe to have originated in Scotland, it is certain that a poverty-stricken clergy is proof of a worldly laity." And this on a complaint by a colonial bishop about undeserved recommendations:

We believe that the evil of indiscriminate alms-giving is now generally recognised, but have often had occasion to note that a similar degree of caution does not appear to be exercised with regard to testimonials. Yet a letter of recommendation, which is ill-advised or based on inadequate knowledge of the applicant is much more mischievous than a five-pound note bestowed on a disingenuous mendicant. It also damages the writer, as it brings lasting discredit on his character and judgment. It is equivalent to a cheque which is bound to be dishonoured.

This practice, of course, is not confined to churches.

—A.M.

FRENCH POLISH

THE INTRIGUE, by Jacques Natanson. Hamish Hamilton.

THE French novelists, in the nineteenth-thirties, were widely acknowledged to have had their English contemporaries whacked. Since then the German occupation of France has left deep wounds, accentuating her growing disunity. Aragon, de Montherlant, Bernanos, Robert Francis, Mauriac and so many others have not all survived the storms of these years with equal credit. Some have not survived at all, while others, like Gide, are old. Whatever the present powers of those whose reputations were secure before the war, it is plain that the dangers and humiliations their country has endured have not prevented the emergence of a new generation of writers in France whose insolent vitality is as abounding as that of the old. It is significant that in these days of paper shortage an appreciable proportion of the new fiction published in England is translated from the French. Flaubert captured the novel for France, captured it from the English, and his literary descendants mean to hold it. Even the French detective story is a distinctly

(continued on next page)