

## CHRONICLE OF HISTORICAL WORKS.

A LARGE number of English works, some of which have already established their reputation, await notice here. Two features in particular stand out; there are some excellent biographies and there are some short studies of great interest written by those who were fighting or, to our sorrow and the hurt of historical work, perished in the War.

Among the biographies two are of remarkable interest and promise. Miss C. M. Ady's *Pius II* (Methuen & Co.) was fortunate in its subject, the Humanist Pope, who had won his spurs at the Council of Basle, who had shewn himself a diplomatist skilful enough to regain Germany for the Papacy, who had travelled almost as widely as he had read, and who, in the end, left us histories of his days almost as interesting as himself. A personality, which is adorned by humour (quite modern in its touch) and also by literary style, does not always inspire those who attempt its description with the same happy gifts or fortune or training, but Miss Ady is not an unworthy biographer of Aeneas Sylvius. When she leaves, as the historian of Aeneas must, the private home, if indeed the great citizen of Pienza could be said to have a home at all, for the wider field of history, her work still keeps its interest and she is adequate for her task: she gives us a good sketch of the Council of Basle (chap. iii) and of the Conclave of Pius II (chap. vii): the pathetic endeavour which Pius made to call Christian Europe to a crusade is described with sympathy and power (chap. xiv), even if the details of the last journey are quite rightly taken from the Pope's favoured companion, the Bishop of Pavia, Ammanati, a Cardinal of his own creation.

Although Pius has interested many through his own peculiar gifts, his life was typical of his day and noteworthy in itself. Born at Pienza (a town which he beautified by a cathedral, a unique specimen of Renaissance architecture) on St Luke's day 1405, he was trained at the University of Siena, the city from which his family, the Piccolomini, had sprung. Then came a time of travel as secretary: as a layman he bore a not unworthy part in the Council of Basle, and indeed a Cardinal's secretary had many chances: in 1442 he was one of a deputation from Basle to the Emperor Frederick III: from his imperial hands he received the laurel wreath of poets, and a little later in the same year he became a secretary in the Chancery at Vienna. He might have done well to leave the Council some four years earlier when he had begun to lose hopes of any real reform from that tardy and too long-lived assembly; but whether he stayed on at the cost of sacrificing his convictions is an open question, for there was something to be said for the Council after

all, as that non-resident but afterwards reforming ecclesiastic, Cardinal d'Allemand, could have told him. As a layman Aeneas was rewarded with a benefice near Botzen, and then with another, Anspach in Bavaria. After three years he was ordained (1446). In 1447 he became Bishop of Trieste, and in 1451 of Siena; but his work lay in Germany to which (1452) he returned, and it was here he gained the laurels not of poesy but of diplomacy. In 1456 he received the Cardinal's hat, but more remunerative honours had to be sought after: he was ready for 'anything he could obtain'. In 1458 Calixtus III, who had made Aeneas Cardinal, died, and in the new Conclave the future Pope was the heart of the Italian as opposed to the French party: after many ups and downs he gained nine votes (not eight as the scrutineer at first gave out): there were twenty-four cardinals in Conclave, and slowly, in spite even of violence, four more 'acceded' to Aeneas: once more fortune had favoured him, and he became Pius II. He was sometimes haunted by ghosts from his more secular past (that determined Teutonic lawyer, Gregory of Heimburg, once reminded him of the lascivious verses he had written long before), yet as Pope he rose to his position, even if piety had not been always the mainspring of his life. But his papacy, like his work in letters, is better known than his earlier and more adventurous days. His death on the eve of the Assumption, 1464, when the Venetian fleet after long (and intentional) delays had just reached Ancona, was the last and not the least pathetic scene in that long history of the Crusades which a greater and very different Pope, Gregory VII, had been the first to plan. Through this changeful and significant life of the last Crusading Pope (for he was this in the original sense of a Crusade) Miss Ady carries us deftly, with a careful use of authorities and much literary skill.

Mr A. G. Ferrers Howell in his book on *St Bernardino of Siena* (Methuen & Co.) deals with the city over which Pius II was bishop, but with a very different character and with a wider scope in point of time if not in place. He has given us a work, like Miss Ady's, written with skill, with ample use of authorities and 'of late researches (it is pleasant to see prefixed to the book a *corrigendum* due to the researches of Fr Johannes Hoper published as the work was progressing). Such care has enabled Mr Ferrers Howell to give us a really important contribution to Franciscan history. The sketch of it down from St Francis to St Bernardino (who was born in 1386) is excellent, and the account of Abbot Joachim and the story of his writings may be instanced for this: the growth of Observants, Conventuals, and Fratricelli, with their special relations among themselves, is sketched clearly and accurately: even a reader somewhat versed in Franciscan history might learn much from the first chapter; and the beginner could get from

it a firm outline of the history. Some hundred and twenty pages sketch the life of the saint: the care of a blind aunt kept him long from becoming a mendicant, but on her death he decided to dwell in a wood, and live on water and herbs; he bought a Bible and a cloak and a goat-skin to keep the Bible dry; then he went back to Siena for a hermit's life, giving himself to devotion and the study of theology. A vision impelled him to join the Franciscan Order (1402), which by both his work and his example he was to regenerate. His study, the knowledge of the human soul which he had gained from himself, thoroughly fitted him to become one of the greatest mediaeval preachers. His life is significant partly as a study of his own beautiful if singular character, and partly as a study of a preacher's career. He had his dangers, which largely arose indeed from his weaknesses: his singularities no less than his ideals had made enemies for him, and (1427) just when the Pope Martin V was at the request of the Sienese about to make him their bishop, he was summoned to Rome on a charge of heresy. The Pope, a supporter of the Observants, over whom he had made Bernardino Vicar-General for Italy in 1438, was deeply grieved yet had no choice but to go on with the trial, and its story is one of the most interesting parts of the book. On the Eve of the Ascension, 1444, Bernardino died after a death-bed scene of great beauty and interest. Chapter iii of the book treats fully of his sermons and his power as a preacher. His minor works are described in chapter iv, and chapter v, written by the capable pen of Mrs Ady (Julia Cartwright), deals with Bernardino in Art. A word of praise is deserved by the appendices dealing with the fifteenth-century biographies (a careful piece of work), the dates of his sermons, his knowledge of Greek, which even if small was noteworthy in his day, and two unpublished letters. It should be added that this excellent work, like Miss Ady's *Pius II*, is beautifully illustrated.

Little space has been left for the late Dr Alex R. MacEwen's first volume (A.D. 397-1546) of *A History of the Church of Scotland*. It is by far the most complete and exhaustive work for the period it covers: perhaps Dr MacEwen does a little injustice to St Wilfrid, and some critics might dissent from his views about the much discussed Culdees. The notes added at the end of some of the chapters are sound in workmanship and, like the whole of the book, are well balanced and instructive. Scotch Church history has been the unhappy victim of too much controversy and too wild fancies, but Dr MacEwen moves on a different plane from many previous writers, and to his work we must return again.

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(To be continued.)