

Library Signpost

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

A Memoir on Maurice Baring

The death of Mr. Maurice Baring last month in Scotland has been given small notice in our American press.



usually follow on the death of our more important writers. Surely it cannot be that Mr. Baring is being judged unworthy

of the accolade of enduring fame? Was it without cause that he was one of the imposing triumvirate in H. James Gunn's widely-praised painting 'Conversations Piece'...

And now two of them are dead, and Belloc survives, though it may not be long before he too will join his companions on the walks of heaven.

Maurice Baring's contribution is considerably less familiar to Catholics than that of his two writing mates. He was not the militant type. He was detached, conservative, and his expression of self was more reserved.

Youth Page Due Next Week

Unavoidable circumstances have caused the omission for this week only of the Children's lectures usually found on this page.

you will find a letter of Belloc and then a letter of Baring, written to Chesterton upon the announcement of his conversion to the Catholic Church.

The same contrast may be noted in Mr. Gunn's Royal Academy picture of the three men: Chesterton and Belloc are seated on either side of a small table, like two generals planning a piece of strategy on a map between them...

His writing covers a wide field, novels, plays, poems, essays, criticism, memoirs. Best among the novels are 'Cat's Cradle', 'The Coat Without', 'Seams and Robert Peckham'.

of course, its recent bastard growth of Bolshevism) and the fruit of this predilection is a little quartet of books on its people and its literature.

Unfortunately we have very few of Baring's books in the Catholic Evidence Library, and most of them are now out of print.

Variety of Catholic Books in '45 Noted

Milwaukee (NC) — In a review of Catholic publishing during 1945, the Rev. Harold C. Gardner, S.J., literary editor of America, has noted the great variety in the works which appeared...

Writing in Between The Lines, organ of the Bruce Publishing Company here, Father Gardner confesses at the same time to be puzzled that so many books by well-known Catholic authors were published in the past year by secular firms.

Father Gardner suggests that publishers establish research fellowship to dig up Catholic folklore, customs, and pioneers sagas now hidden in parish and college archives.

The Literary Cavalcade Sagas of Decay

By John O'Connor

The intellectual cancers and the moral running sores that are the American day-time radio serials, commonly called "soap operas", are the greatest single menace to the mind and to the spiritual integrity of the average American woman.

The average American woman is screwed in her dealings with trade-marks. She will not tolerate laxity in the part of her children, although anyone who thinks the "teen age problem is all sweetness and light is either blind or running a journalistic racket.

"The radio," wrote Philip Wylie in 'A Generation of Vipers', "has made sentimentality the 20th century Plymouth Rock. As a discipline, I have forced myself to sit a whole morning listening to soap operas, along with twenty million more who were busy sweeping dust under the rug while planning to drown their progeny in honey or bask in their heads.

Brotherhood rather than reason — and emotion without reason; there is the guiding rule. The fact that many serials are turned out in the assembly line manner should be proof enough of the little originality and artistic ability necessary to put such stupid words and sordid ideas in the air.

Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, while an advocate of national suicide via birth prevention, has had some sound things to say

about the immoral effect of these various programs. Recently this New York Herald Tribune feature writer picked up the soap operas on a number of points. Wrote she:

"... Conventional listening to twenty-three serials proved that the broadcasting companies, the advertising agents, and the sponsors, had manfully resisted the temptation to shatter the dream world of their wretched listeners. If nature abhors a vacuum, the serial writers will low in one every day. They would have women believe that falling in and out of love... solving personal problems is the end-all and be-all of a woman's life."

While one must admit that a great number of American women probably pay little or no attention to inferred or proclaimed morals of the soap operas, the number who do unconsciously absorb their nonsense is increasing by day.

Some may call it "escape" in the sense that many call painting, music, and art an escape. But painting, music, and art have their rewards. The soap opera, conceived in commercialism and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equally unthinking, offers nothing but titillation, sublimation, and the foreboding of national death.

They escape reality. They ignore the realities of the spirit. They lack artistic conception and intelligent execution. They are imbued with a Cinderella myth on some occasions and with the so-called "eternal triangle" on others. They are concerned with what happens tomorrow.

For you see they do care about what happens tomorrow — a sort of "eat, drink — and tomorrow you cry." Fred Allen, the only completely intelligent comedian in the business, recently confessed that he had once been in a soap opera. The announcer asked him now he liked it.

"It was all right," said Allen. "You know, one day we lost the script — so we just cried and cried and cried for fifteen minutes. It was the most successful broadcast we ever had."

Recently, Joseph P. Kennedy, former ambassador to London, strongly suggested to local newspapers that they stop trying to imitate the big city publications and give a little more space to local affairs and to local talent.

Books could well follow suit. There are too many lines crisscrossing through the loudspeaker, as Mr. Wylie said. And the big danger is that, over a period of years, morals will be talked into... and then opinions will follow.

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