

Book Reviews

GOLD OR GOD? By H. M. Capes. (Sands; 3/6).

Those who read this book as a serial story in *The Irish Catholic* must be glad to have it in more durable form; others, I imagine, will regard it in one of two ways—either as a welcome return to a pre-war type of novel, or (if they be 'moderns') as a rather amusing survival. Its style, like its period, belongs to the days when motors were few; so do its characters, especially the timid, rather spineless but attractive young widow, her autocratic brother, the 'bright and lively' *Molly*, and the exemplary little boy, *Eric*. It is a love story based on the mixed-marriage question, and has a happy ending. It is very simple and very sincere.

R. R.

THE BUD OF THE SPRING. By Mary Frances McHugh. (Macmillan; 7/6).

The first part of this book deals with school life, and exactly how refreshing the treatment is, only those can know who have been nauseated by most of the school stories of the last fourteen or fifteen years. Here the author pays off no old scores, seeks no relief for earlier repressions, makes no attempt to foist upon the public personal propaganda in the guise of fiction. This is the story of a normal boy. He is sensitive; every normal boy is. He differs from his friends and foes; in other words, he is an individual, like every normal boy. His life grows into 'the bud of the spring' with some pain, some mystery, in health and in happiness. He is not subjected to those exaggerated experiences that afford most school-novelists (apparently) such pleasure and most readers (certainly) so much discomfort: nor are we treated to a detailed account of selected periods of development that result in a distorted perspective. The worst here is the militaristic discipline and the terroristic method of teaching sometimes employed at *St. Damien's*. The school is an Irish orphanage, run by unidentifiable Brothers; the portrait of the Superior is masterful; the tragedy of schoolmastering in epitome! When *Eugene* goes out into the world, the freshness, the cleanliness, the sparkle remain, and his love-story is a reverent piece of work. I have no intention of giving a synopsis for the benefit of those who are too lazy to read; to the rest I will suggest that one who can so trenchantly observe *en passant* that 'Brother after Brother pilloried him for inattention' knows the value of words, and refer them to chapter xi for a particularly lovely piece of writing.

R. R.