

BLACKFRIARS

incalculable man who was fond of machinery, and was a rustic by choice, who was a quiet and forceful mystic and thought of the growth of the Church in terms of a chart showing the number of converts an hour.

MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

LETTERS TO HIS FIANCEE. By Leon Bloy. Translated by Barbara Wall. (Sheed & Ward; 5/-.)

"For some time I have been rather embarrassed in writing to you. I have been afraid of your criticism. You have made fun of my way of expressing myself in the absolute . . ." The prevaricator! When she reassures him, he confesses "Those were exaggerated remarks . . . I would not be what I am—an artist—if I could prevent that bitch, literature, from penetrating even into the most naïf stirrings of my heart."

Marchenoir being deeply in love, and enticed away from his high horse, appears very lovable himself: very simple and essentially humble. This can be verified only in the dominant tone of the letters. Yet to risk a brief quotation: "But, my love, every good that I could possibly have in me has been given to me and has remained in me in spite of myself; because I have committed such great sins as to banish me from grace altogether." Or again: "I am profoundly moved by the idea that you are going to enter the Church, that you are going to become *effectively* a daughter of the Holy Ghost, and that it is partly my doing—in the sense that you are receiving this magnificent reward for your compassionate love for this poor and desperate man." But it cost him more than this to confess to her quite flatly, quite undramatically, as he did, his morbid love for suffering, his tendency to nourish and deck out his own misery. Recovering from his bitter moods, it is forgiveness he asks as much as pity.

Any doubt one may have had is dispelled of the worth of the residual irreducible suffering he tells of: of his grief because he is not a saint. "The spirit of prayer has forsaken me . . . I have abandoned myself to the unbridled lusts of my sensuality and have never been able to recapture my former holiness." Like a bird that knows what it is to soar in the light of heaven: but now it "has its wings cut off and is shut up in a dark cellar where it has to crawl about among the most disgusting reptiles." The greatness of Bloy and his power to move and shame us rise from the attitude that underlay this suffering: from his refusal, even when he was failing to become a saint, to lower his Christian standard one inch, to allow his eyes to become blinded to the glory of God. He would not make a truce with his ignominy. As for the cause of his spiritual failure, in so far as there was

REVIEWS

failure—it seems that it was not long before Jean discovered it in his “impatience.” (See Luke ix, 53; Acts i, 6.)

He is passionately and suppliantly in love; but his love has a tremendous dignity in being inseparably one with his love of God. He woos with his Christian soul, serenades his lady who is Danish and hitherto Protestant with pæans of Catholic faith and love, requiring that the altar steps should be their genuine meeting-place. Perhaps nowhere else in biographic literature can the Catholic ideal of marriage be found so marvellously proclaimed.

The translator has carried out a bold undertaking triumphantly. (One may mildly question the precise accuracy of the word “Guess,” p. 156.)

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

MISCELLANEOUS

ADVENTURE OF THE AMETHYST. By Cecily Hallack. Illustrated by Rosemary de Souza. (Macmillan; 7/6.)

Though this book is something very different from a “thriller” it is most thrilling. It is a story, packed with humour and action, about very real and attractive characters; it is a complete Christian and Catholic apologetic, covering the whole ground from the existence of God to the veneration of the Saints; and the story and the apologetic are one. It is this unity that makes the book so extremely valuable, if not indeed unique.

The amethyst of the title is set in the episcopal ring of Mgr. North—North of the North-West, or just *Monseigneur* as he becomes early on in the story—who is recuperating, after the rigours of his apostolic life amidst the frosts and snows of his Canadian diocese, in a little coastal village. We almost recognize the village; but that is characteristic of the whole book in which incidents and places and people are so vividly and truly drawn as to seem familiar to us. Thus the four children, who with the bishop play the leading parts, are delightfully human; we feel that we know them. They are little acquainted with religion, and understand its import not at all; but about the time of their discovering Monseigneur in his quiet retreat, their parents have, unknown to the children, discovered the true faith. It is left to Mgr. North, following their romantic interest in his episcopal ring, to lead them on the *Adventure of the Amethyst* to the discovery of the treasures of the Catholic Faith. Especially in the earlier part of the story the progress of the adventure depends upon the expositions of Monseigneur; and it is remarkable to see the ease and the completeness with which the author is able to unfold, in language not too learned for the young mind, both the philosoph-