

research, as to glorify the factious policies of her heroes the Huguenots. For its high price the book is somewhat meagre, and it is only occasionally that Mrs Grew expands her account sufficiently to make one of her characters come to life. She does this with the sympathetic figure of the Protestant minister de Chambrun, and one can only wish that Mrs Grew had lived to write a far larger and more interesting book.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

MITRI OR THE STORY OF PRINCE DEMETRIUS AUGUSTINE GALLITZIN. By Daniel Sargent. (Longmans; \$3.50.)

This is a charming book. Mr Daniel Sargent has already given us an excellent life of St Thomas More and in this volume he has shown again his power of evocative writing and his ability to make a character live. The publishers refer to his 'rugged, pulsing, scholarly prose'; presumably by the first epithet they mean his occasional habit of using an adjective for an adverb; but apart from this minor defect the writing is admirably suited to the presentation of a delightful and inspiring character. The story opens in the Europe of the Enlightenment, with Prince Gallitzin's mother as the friend of Diderot and Goethe and there is a vivid description of aristocratic intellectual circles. In this atmosphere the young prince grew up, almost completely overshadowed by his brilliant mother who, however, on becoming a Catholic, saw to it that her children should also be taught the faith. The young prince then went on the Grand Tour which, in his case, brought him to the United States in 1792 and in that new world he discovered his own liberty of action and determined to become a priest. He became the apostle of a remote district in the Alleghanies and lived on to an advanced age to become an almost legendary figure. This is essentially the story of a priest, though of one with a romantic and unlikely origin, a most lovable, human priest, with many faults and more virtues. In this capacity he was the initiator of a great Catholic agricultural settlement in the wild district he chose as his sphere of work. The one fault one might find with this delightful biography is that it does not sufficiently describe for European readers the eventual fortunes of the community Prince Gallitzin established at his Loretto in the Alleghany Mountains in the early years of the nineteenth century, where he lived for so many years and became the patriarch and friend of a great section of the infant Church in the United States.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

A TREATISE ON THE NOVEL. By Robert Liddell. (Cape; 9s. 6d.)

'Fiction is the delineation of character in action', says Mr Liddell, and his *Treatise on the Novel* may be simply described as the most exact, as it is certainly the best written, treatment of that process which has yet appeared in English. Mr Liddell starts with notable advantages in a literary critic. He has an almost clinical accuracy of

analysis. His range of reading is disconcertingly wide: Henry James, Proust, Flaubert we expect, but the Roman Missal, Ben Jonson and Mark Twain provide texts that are equally relevant. And his judgments are fortified by a recognition of the demands made on the critic by moral philosophy that is rare in our time.

His method is deceptively simple. Chapters on the general problem of the criticism of fiction; on the novelist's range and values; on plot, character and background, are carefully illustrated: generalisations spring from the inner necessity of an argument that is always modest and amply justified. Mr Liddell's preference for Henry James, Proust and Miss Compton-Burnett reflects his respect for the proper virtues of a novelist: integrity, detachment and an acceptance of the limitations of his medium. 'On an anti-human philosophy no good fiction can be built. The novel is about human beings'. Again, and most discerningly, Mr Liddell reminds us 'that a writer's is a contemplative, not an active vocation. . . . 'The contemplative writer serves the world in detachment from it, just as in his different and harder way the contemplative religious serves the world'.

It is a notable occasion when a work of criticism so accomplished—and so honest—as *A Treatise on the Novel* appears to expose the gloomy wastes of ideological mediocrity. The hard discipline of writing and especially in a form so superficially undetermined as that of fiction, needs to be revealed for what it is. And the novelist's responsibility, vocation as a humanist (for such it is: 'the conveying to the world in the best chosen language of the most thorough knowledge of human nature, and the happiest delineation of its varieties' is Mr Liddell's definition) need to be emphasised anew.

Three valuable appendices provide, first, an excellent anthology of *loci classici* for the novelist's art, second, a devastating analysis of the Freudian 'explanation' of *The Turn of the Screw*, and, finally, an appreciation of the novels of I. Compton-Burnett, who is, for Mr Liddell, 'of all English novelists now writing . . . the greatest and the most original artist'.

One can scarcely allow Mr Liddell to get away with his attribution to Proust of 'the mind of the greatest man of this century'. Such a statement demands a fuller proof than any offered in this book.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.