

Blackfriars

not only a great enlarger of the Church's foreign missions, but he was also one of the 'Popes of the Concordats,' who reconstructed the fallen Churches of more than half Europe—yet not one word is said about this in the sketch of his life.

F.R.B.

DE SACRAMENTIS : Vol. I. *De Sacramentis in genere. De Bap-tismo, De Confirmatione*; in-8 max., 1929, pag viii-174. 7 lire. Vol. II. *De Eucharistia, De Poenitentia, De Ex-trema Unctione, De Ordine, De Matrimonio*; in-8 max., 1931, pag. iv-340. 14 lire. By P. Adeod. M. Schembri, O.S.A. (Turin : Maretti.)

This is a treatise in speculative theology. It will therefore prove of more immediate interest to the teacher than to the practitioner. The author, worthy representative of the Augustinian school, sets forth in a clear and scholarly manner, the positive teaching of the Church and offers at the same time solutions (not necessarily acceptable) of the various well-known minor problems in the speculative treatment of the Sacraments. It is natural that the author should found his work on the teaching of St. Augustine, but the horde of minor theologians whose opinions are adduced might well have given place to the weightier pronouncements of St. Thomas and the other great Doctors of the Church who are quoted all too rarely.

H.J.C.

MY RUSSIAN VENTURE. By Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. (George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd. ; 8/6.)

Soviet Russia is the Mecca of journalists, writers, snobs anxious to be up-to-date in every way, and also international business-men, great and small, eager to get away with some of the spoils of a once wealthy country. Naturally the Third International, the *de facto* Government of Russia, allows only a certain category of travellers to cross her boundary, and seldom commits the blunder of granting visas to persons whose previous knowledge of the country and its language would make them propaganda-proof. Yet these two conditions are essential for an impartial and reliable account.

Book Reviews

Mrs. Chesterton's book is typical of an attitude towards bolshevism—'the great Russian experiment' as it is sometimes called—prevailing amongst the Western *intelligentzia*. But its very title is misleading, as neither Minsk, in former days a ninety per cent. Jewish town, nor Kiev, the cosmopolitan capital of the Ukraine, are *Russia* proper. It is as if a Chinese journalist visited Llandudno under the auspices of Mr. Saklatvala, and Edinburgh under those of Mr. Maxton. Back in Peking the gentleman produces a book upon his 'English venture,' glibly discussing England under every aspect, political, social, economic and religious. Mrs. Chesterton, knowing no word of Russian, assures her readers she investigated the country independently of any *Ogpu* or *Cheka*; in reality her tour was as 'conducted' as any other, and unconsciously she says what she was told to say, and saw exactly as much as she was allowed to see. The Soviet humoured their amiable lady visitor, and let her 'play about' whilst keeping a wary eye upon every movement of hers. A fascinating 'Jean' and Hindus, the American jew, begin the author's tuition very successfully in Minsk, where she also takes quite seriously a farcical individual styling himself 'Foreign Minister.' When the ladies—for Mrs. Chesterton is accompanied by a friend 'Bunny'—decide to see something of rural conditions, a mysterious *English*-speaking German meets them in the first village they visit, and takes up the coaching so well begun in Minsk. With childlike trust Mrs. Chesterton accepts 'Hans's' statements, including his description of *kulaks* and their iniquities, and the boast that a million *kulaks* have been summarily shot is received by the English traveller with calm philosophy.

Another mysterious and charming *English*-speaking person, this time a lady 'Miranda' guides the writer about Kiev, and we are treated to more Soviet propaganda. This included a visit to 'Sparta'—a peasant commune. The place, so enthusiastically described (pp. 198-203) is apparently one of the show-places intended for the edification of guileless foreigners.

Having seen a few churches open Mrs. Chesterton denies religious persecution in Soviet Russia—on the strength of 'Miranda's' words.

Mrs. Chesterton, being an able writer, the book is readable and interesting, provided it is taken for what it is worth. But the writer has overlooked the essential point. The Five-Year plan may succeed, though latest information seems to show the reverse, bolshevism may bring *material* prosperity to a nation of *robots*, but is that all? Is it by bread alone that man

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lives? The *soul* of Russia has been killed, and 'what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' This moral and spiritual murder of a country, ignored by Mrs. Chesterton, has been realized by Gene Tunney, the American boxer, who in the melting of her glorious old bells saw a poignant symbol of the death of the once 'Holy Russia.' But Gene Tunney is a Catholic!

The last sentence of the book reads thus: 'A new and terrific chapter in the history of mankind, Soviet Russia is the writing on Europe's capitalist wall.'

Europe's great guilt was to allow and foster the growth of a hideous thing—a potential menace to her *Christian* civilisation!

O.B.

THE SATIN SLIPPER; or THE WORST IS NOT THE SUREST. By Paul Claudel. Translated by the Rev. Fr. John O'Connor. With a Frontispiece by David Jones. (Sheed & Ward; 8/6.)

'Who judge of Plays from their own penny gaff,
At God's great theatre will hiss and laugh.'

These lines of Patmore's are appropriate to *The Satin Slipper*, which, since it depicts a conflict between good and evil, may with truth be likened to a drama of 'God's great theatre,' in which motives and action to be intelligible must be judged according to the sanctions of the spiritual rather than of the material order.

In this Spanish Play of Four Days against a background of Spain in the late sixteenth century, the old world and the new, and particularly the sea, Claudel manifests, through the lives of the two principal characters, Prouheze and Rodrigo, with great clearness and conviction, the argument 'that all things minister to a Divine Purpose and so to one another,' which Purpose 'sin also serves,' so that the reader may discern through all the confusion, contradiction, sin and suffering portrayed as the action proceeds, the Finger of God writing straight with crooked lines His Divine assurance that 'all shall be well.'

This mysterious 'Sin also serves' is the pivot of the Play, and may be seen symbolised even in the stage directions where, in spite of slackness and errors of production, the progress of the drama is not impeded. There is a satisfying completeness about *The Satin Slipper*, for in it the author does not isolate the life of body or mind from that of the soul. Hence the effects on the individual of such spiritual realities as prayer, suffering, sacrifice are not merely left implicit, but made explicit and shown in action.