

interpretation of the Vision, we shall set it side by side with the allegorical commentaries which re-create much of St Paul's vision of the Church.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

QUESTIONS OF PRECEDENCE. By François Mauriac. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 12s. 6d.)

Though only now put into English, this is an early Mauriac originally written in 1921; it may please those who find Mauriac's concern with sin oppressive. Nevertheless this is authentic Mauriac; the sense of sin is there, though less mature (some would say obtrusive) than in his later works. It is an attack on the snobberies and cruelties of Bordeaux society at the beginning of this century, told in the first person by a young man (unnamed) who, half in and half out of the ruling caste, takes his share in their failings. Although Mauriac outlines the characters with ruthless clarity there is no bitterness. As he indicates himself, the characters are more like caricatures. But the delicacy with which he indicates the hero's share of responsibility for much of what others do is unsurpassed; the same is true of the manner in which Mauriac works out his belief in the spiritual irrevocability of our smallest acts. This is not the greatest Mauriac but there is the unmistakable touch of the master. For Gerard Hopkins's translation one can only repeat all the earlier words of praise.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

VICTORS AND VANQUISHED. By Francis Stuart. (Gollancz; 16s.)

This is described as a quiet novel, and indeed it is, for Mr Stuart believes that the world is shaped as much by the secret workings of a man's heart and mind as by the public doings of politicians and soldiers. His hero is a young Irishman who, without any attempt to withdraw himself, finds himself uncommitted to the international events which threw Europe into a turmoil in 1939. His decision to return to his teaching job in Germany was brought about by neither pacifism nor neutrality. He had no theories to air, no axe to grind; his problem is entirely personal, to choose between his wife and the German Jewess with whom he has fallen in love. On the moral level we may query the unselfishness of his behaviour, but there is no question of Mr Stuart's success in telling a private story with no distracting excursions into self-analysis. It is the story of a young man who sets himself to do what he believes, rightly or wrongly, should be done. There is no isolationism; the horrors of war and Jew-baiting are there neither muted nor strident, and as the author carries us along with his beautiful

prose we are reminded of another Irishman who sang the same song in another key, Yeats's airman:

‘Nor law nor duty bade me fight  
Nor public men nor cheering crowds;  
A lonely impulse of delight  
Led to this tumult in the clouds.’

Mr Stuart writes of another sort of lonely impulse which also helps to shape the destiny of mankind.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

TWO CENTURIES OF OPERA AT COVENT GARDEN. By Harold Rosenthal. (Putnam; 75s.).

It may seem a lot of money, seventy-five shillings, to pay for a book on opera. Not this one, though. It is worth every penny. A formidable amount of research has been done by the author. There can be nothing relevant in the last two centuries of Covent Garden opera that Mr Rosenthal has overlooked. The result could well have made stodgy reading. Quite the contrary here, though such encyclopedic material calls for reading in reasonable amounts. Otherwise that after-enduring-The-Ring feeling will ensue. And there are many funny stories to enliven the pages. Not to mention opera titles which are often so droll.

Apart from the pleasure reading about great singers of the past gives to the opera-lover, this book is undoubtedly the perfect source for improving one's knowledge of the growth and development of opera in this country. Moreover, it could make one an expert in operamanship. Armed with information culled from Mr Rosenthal's researches, even the most timorous opera novice might venture to mingle with the interval crowds in the gallery bar at the Garden.

Such a monumental work as this demands much more than the praise of a reviewer. One can also express the hope that it will receive official recognition and reward.

D.G.M.