

intuitive truths, and with the struggle of a man in the face of the conflicting exigencies of life and art. We see an individual very much at the mercy of phenomena, submitting himself to them without choice, without preference, feeling intensely the fascination of the forms of life, yet supremely concerned to preserve the integrity of a rigorous conception of art from the encroaches of life and love, at the same time conscious of the necessity to live vitally so that the matter for transmutation into art should be essential experience. The tension was not resolved until the burst of creative activity in February, 1922.

Van Heerikhuizen is scrupulously careful to preserve the contradictions and complexities, the changing phases of Rilke, and most anxious not to make a unity out of a multiplicity, not to simplify his task by a false lucidity. He refuses to see any system in Rilke's work, he sees none in the *Duisener Elegien*, he does not make the mistake of imagining that Rilke is a thinker. He is an intuitive artist and therein lies his value for van Heerikhuizen. He obviously represents for him the finest type of modern man. The last chapter deals with the poet's hostile attitude to Christianity, which the Dutch writer is obliged to characterise as 'unhistorical'. His very choice of word reveals van Heerikhuizen's 'modernity', of which he is proud. What Rilke writes of Christianity is not 'untrue', but 'unhistorical'; it is true for Rilke and therefore assumes a subjective truth in this Rilke-centred world. It is both the strength and the weakness of this work that it is Rilke-centred. As an aid to the understanding of the poet it is undoubtedly of great value, but it leaves those unsatisfied for whom intuition is not the most valid criterion in their relationship to the world. Not all of us will agree with van Heerikhuizen's concluding hint that it is the inspiration of such as Rilke that is most needed in the world today.

ERNEST BEAUMONT

THE LETTERS OF ELIZABETH MYERS. Edited by Littleton Powys.
(Chapman and Hall; 18s.)

Elizabeth Myers died in May 1947 at the age of thirty-four, after nearly nine years of illness. She was twenty-five when she was first attacked by tuberculosis, and from then on she was never less than semi-invalid and often much worse; yet despite this she wrote three novels of great originality and vitality, a large number of short stories, articles and reviews, learnt Greek, and acted as literary adviser to her publishers: an amount of activity no less than heroic for one who could write, in 1944, 'I have very little pain but the worst thing about T.B. is the weariness it brings, and sometimes when I creep about so tired that I've nearly lost the sense of my own identity, then I should be glad to be free of my lungs and this tiresome body.' (page 213.)

This volume of letters edited with a very useful Introduction and

notes by her husband, Littleton Powys, though not entirely even in quality—she was at her best when writing to other writers, as is shown by the beautiful series to John Cowper Powys—besides the interesting light it throws on the width of her reading, the genesis of her novels and her method of working, shows an equally intense generosity of spirit, and a deep understanding of the experience of suffering. 'I am sure', she writes to Bruce Marshall, 'you have found, as I have, that every loss brings some unexpected gain and that God returns a hundredfold the things he takes away. *I sympathise with you, my dear, but I am not sorry for you.*' (p. 311); and in the same letter she quotes a most moving paragraph from her own 'Mrs Christopher' to 'speak for her'.

There are few of these letters which do not, in a phrase of Gorki she was fond of quoting, 'strike a reader on the heart like a blow from a stick', and all combine to give the impression of someone who loved all created things, almost without discrimination, but rightly, by reason of her profound through often unexpressed faith.

B.W.

DAS ERSTE WUNDER JESU. By Rudolf Schnackenburg. (Herder, Freiburg; 3 DM.)

A new volume in Herder's series *Die Biblische Schatzkammer* gives a useful little commentary on John 2, 1-11, the narrative of the miracle of Cana, in which the author traces the leading ideas of Johannine theology—ideas such as 'revelation', 'glory', 'faith', and the underlying conception of Christ's Person and mission. A valuable aid to homiletics or devotion in the compass of sixty-seven pages.

HANDBUCH DER DOGMENGESCHICHTE. Edited by M. Schmaus, J. Geiselman and H. Rahner. Band IV, Faszikel 3, *Busse und Letzte Olung*, by Dr Bernhard Poschmann. (Herder, Freiburg; 12 DM.)

This is the first part to appear of Herder's long-planned and comprehensive *History of Dogma*, which seeks to supply the need for an up-to-date Catholic successor to such works as Schwane, which dates back to 1862, and Tixeront and de Groot, which only deal with the earlier period. It will consist of four volumes and a supplement, arranged according to subject-matter, and will appear in fascicles, as rapidly as present conditions allow.

This fascicle, by a well-known authority, deals competently and concisely with the history of Penance and Extreme Unction, and is particularly lucid on the early controversies. There are copious references, and bibliographies precede each of the chronological sections.

B.W.