

Book Reviews

THE GREAT RELIGIOUS ORDERS. By Piers Compton. Illustrated by Margot Foster. (Elkin, Matthews & Marrot; pp. ix, 224; 6/-).

Mr. Compton gives us sketches of the history of the chief religious orders, each within some twelve or fourteen pages. The founders and origins find the fullest treatment, the growth, organisation and practices, and the more notable members and houses are adequately outlined. The matter is well selected, and with it is combined some insight into the peculiar appeal of each order and its effects in secular history. The more ancient orders only are included, and the Jesuits, Oratorians and Passionists alone of modern ones find a place. The history of each in England meets with special attention. The illustrations seem out of keeping with the rest of the book, and some of the orders they do not really illustrate and none of them do they render illustrious.

O.M.

THE HIGHER COURT. A play in four acts. By M. E. M. Young. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 3/6.)

THE NEW J.L. Short Stories. By M. E. M. Young. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 5/-.)

Mr. Pryce-Green, his daughters, Idalia and Polly, and Ethelbert, his son, find their combined incomes slender enough; Fred, a struggling medical practitioner, is not able to support Polly, whom he desires to marry, and is forbidden the house just as she sets out for Paris; but chance and the police bring a street casualty to the Pryce-Green's flat and Fred attends him professionally. The invalid guest remains a long time and is unable to give his name; he falls in love with Idalia, but imagines she is engaged to Fred; he appears poor and ill-nourished, but proves to be a millionaire newspaper proprietor whose disappearance begins to be a matter of public interest. After his identification he proposes to Idalia and is at length accepted. But Idalia is a Catholic. She has to overcome scruples about making a mixed marriage before consenting to the engagement, and just as a happy ending seems imminent she discovers that MacManus is married and divorced: her renunciation is the climax of the play.

Anyone can see through the millionaire business; why can't Fred? Anyone can see what MacManus is driving at when he talks of Fred's engagement and the mixed marriage problems; why doesn't Idalia explain simply and at once? The fact is that the heroine is unconvincing: in spite of her vaunted matter-

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of-factness she is sentimental; she is quite ridiculous when she weeps about MacManus's attitude towards money, when she repeatedly cries, 'Oh! dear!' and when, for some reason, she refuses to tell her family she is engaged; but the producer could largely overcome these defects. By the way, Miss Young really must not treat her producer and actors as children! Her use of italics is indefensible and there are far too many minor stage directions, although grouping is entirely neglected. Apart from the lapses I have mentioned and the unreal policeman the character drawing is good. 'The Higher Court' can be confidently recommended for acting in parish halls.

Most of Miss Young's short stories might well have appeared in a superior parish magazine: they are varied in subject, treatment and style, but 'For the Pope's Intention' is a gem.

R.R.

LIFE AS WE HAVE KNOWN IT. By Co-operative Working Women. Edited by Margaret Llewelyn Davies. Introduction by Virginia Woolf. (The Hogarth Press; 5/-.)

Here are a few voices speaking for the huge inarticulate mass of working women; here may be read at first hand the experiences, difficulties and heroisms of the poor. The book may be recommended to that half of the world which does not know how the poor live and die. One cannot but feel that the plea urged here and there in the book for divorce and the eugenic programme generally would not be backed up to any great extent by English working folk, who are instinctively right in these matters, though heaven knows how long they will remain so in the face of the intensive modern propaganda.

L'Apocalypse. Edition abrégée par le R. P. Lavergne, O.P. Préface par le R. P. Allo, O.P. (Paris; Gabalda; 10 francs.)

It is about ten years since Père Allo published his masterly commentary on the Apocalypse. He was writing for scholars, and consequently was unable, as he tells us in a preface to the little work under review, to present the 'spiritualité si haute, et, en dépit des apparences, si lucide' of the last of the books of the New Testament in a way suited to ordinary readers. Père Lavergne has now attempted to do this, giving a short introduction, Père Allo's translation, and the substance of his exegesis. It is unnecessary to say more than that Père Allo, himself the best judge, warmly approves of the result.

L.W.