

BLACKFRIARS

permission of their own pastor to go to another, they must go to their own parish priest. This is the *raison d'être* of the decree. By this action the Council established no new rights and imposed no new obligations, but merely gave ecumenical sanction to, or made universal, a discipline already in existence; being prompted thereto by the fact that that discipline had in some measure, and under certain influences, fallen into desuetude." This legislation is now obsolete as regards confessing to any particular priest—Catholics are free to make their confessions, even the annual one, to any priest approved by the bishop as a confessor. The obligation of making the annual confession of course remains.

From these few quotations some idea of the interest of the book and its usefulness may perhaps be gathered. Father Schroeder has placed ecclesiastical students under a debt of gratitude.

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

SORROW BUILT A BRIDGE. By Katherine Burton. (Longmans; 7s. 6d.)

Few modern biographies can offer so varied an appeal as this history of the life and labours of Nathaniel Hawthorne's second daughter, Rose, known in later life as Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.S.D. There are those, for instance, whose interest in literary history will respond to the vivid re-incarnation of nineteenth century writers, like Hawthorne himself, as well as Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow and the Brownings, friends of the family during Rose's early years. There are others who will find their attraction in the gradual, almost inevitable, conversion of this daughter of New England Calvinism to the Catholic Faith. Those, again, who can appreciate a work of art will be grateful to the author for her simplicity and restraint which has enabled her to use with true dramatic effect, shorn of heroics, the splendid material at her disposal. Social workers, and particularly those in the Catholic ranks, will find a practical object-lesson of Christ-like charity exercised in the most repellent circumstances; whilst Tertiaries, and others directly or indirectly concerned with the many-sided apostolate of St. Dominic's Order, will rejoice to have this fitting memorial of a holy and model Dominican Tertiary. But there is no one, unless he retain no spark of humanity, who could fail to be moved profoundly by the simple recital of this heroic woman's almost incredible work, especially in her first lonely efforts, for the abandoned and unspeakably horrible cancer cases amongst the destitute of New York.

The character of Rose Hawthorne, from her earliest years, is finely and sympathetically drawn and the difficulties of her

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married life, especially after the death of her only child, cause us little surprise. In 1871 she married Francis Parsons Lathrop, a lovable but wayward character, who could not measure up to the high standard of her father's memory unconsciously adopted by her, and a natural incompatibility of temperament was rendered unbearably acute by her husband's growing indulgence in the vice of alcoholic intemperance. Both of them were received into the Church in 1891, but it was only two years later that she left him, probably in the hope of compelling him into control of his weakness. A reconciliation proved futile and she again left him, this time finally. She was now all alone, bound "as by a bridge to the dead." This final separation from the husband she loved was the consummation of years of growing personal sorrow so soon now to be transmuted into a very divine compassion, for, in the beautiful words of Maurice Baring, "sorrow built a bridge . . . into the infinite . . . One has to accept sorrow for it to be a healing power, and that is the most difficult thing in the world." Rose Hawthorne Lathrop accepted it, and it became a healing power not only for her own soul but also for the souls and bodies of so many of God's abandoned poor. Having come into contact with incurable cancer in its most repulsive form amongst the destitute, she determined to devote her life to their service. Without money or resources she established herself in a miserable slum tenement, sought out the pathetic and despairing objects of her charity, heroically overcame her natural repugnance and cleaned and dressed their gaping wounds. Having put her hand to the plough, she did not look back. "Think twice," said a well-meaning friend who sought her out. "I have thought once and I have decided," answered Rose. Then began an epic story equalled only in the lives of some of the Saints of God like Rose of Lima or Damian the Leper; and Miss Burton has told that story as it deserves to be told, simply and starkly. She has told, too, how the Servants for the Relief of Incurable Cancer came into being, how through the understanding help of a worthy Dominican, Fr. Thuyente, O.P., she herself became the foundress of a Dominican group, how public interest was gradually aroused, and how more than one fine hospital home was eventually established and infused with the same spirit of Christlike charity as that which transformed her rooms in the slum tenement a quarter of a century earlier. She had said in those early days of herself and the splendid companion who had joined her: "We plan to make this work so thoroughly and affectionately gentle that even the poor can praise it." Perhaps her greatest merit is that her work justified and gained this praise from the poor.

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