

boxing-gloves teaching young toughs the noble art of self-defence. A best-seller by a lady who (metaphorically) leapt over the wall has told us charmingly what happened to her before she took the leap. The innocent inquirer, anxious to know what goes on behind those high walls and mysterious grilles, might well be a bit puzzled by these different presentations of what is a fascinating subject. The need has been abundantly met and quite a literature has grown up and it has become fashionable for nuns to write books telling us that nuns are not so nunnish as we were led to think. Sister Mary Laurence gives a kind of correspondence course on convent life from the inside to six young ladies—a bunch of flappers we might call them if we wished to fall into her engaging use of the slang of yesteryear. The young ladies in question would certainly not read a high and dry treatise on the religious life and the simple, breezy, humorous letters of Sister Mary Laurence are just what they need. The letter is an excellent medium for straightforward, natural exposition, and other readers besides the young ladies will profit by the perusal of this book in which a nun reverently and discreetly lifts the veil on a life which is heroic while remaining very human. A modern writer in the United States has said: 'The unknown warrior of the Church militant in America is not a man but a woman with a veil'. It is true of the Church militant in every part of the world. H. A. L. Fisher says of modern nuns: 'They nurse the sick, tend the poor, teach the young, console the dying. The educations of girls is largely in their hands. That which was purest and best in mediaeval monasticism survives in these devoted women.' Sister Mary Laurence is recommending that great and glorious vocation to the youth of today.

BERNARD DELANY, O.P.

SOLOVYEV: PROPHET OF RUSSIAN-WESTERN UNITY. By Egbert Munzer. (Hollis and Carter; 12s. 6d.)

Egbert Munzer was a distinguished Bavarian who left Germany when Hitler came to power: he died in 1948, while holding the chair of sociology and statistics at Laval University in Canada. He was a many-sided scholar—jurist, canonist, mathematician and sociologist—with a special interest in the relationship between Russian and Western thought, and his study of Vladimir Solovyev is one of the best pieces of writing on the subject in English.

Dr Munzer remarks that 'neither the Russian Revolution nor the last war has been able to awaken Western thought to a more profound and correct appreciation of the powerful spiritual currents which have been erupting in Russia for generations and are now coming to the surface of historical reality. . . . The incapacity of the West to come to

political terms with Russia has its counterpart on the plane of the spirit; the only difference is that here, in the realm of "things unseen", the errors and misunderstandings are more consequential and the missed opportunities are more irretrievable.' He believes that Solovyev's idea of Godmanhood is the philosophical and theological formulation of the aspirations which lie at the heart of the Christian thought of Russia, and that it has a 'common foundation of opposites' with Russian communism. The latter 'wants to realize an idea which may best be described as "Mangodhood", as opposed to Solovyev's "Godmanhood"'. In other words, Communism is a secular perversion of the religious idea of Divine Humanity.' Accordingly, Dr Munzer examines and expounds Solovyev's master-ideas, Sophia and Divine Humanity, Theocracy and the Church, Theurgy, Apocalypse and Anti-Christ, keeping them in close relation to Solovyev's own life, for 'his personal life in human society impressed his fellow men even more than his writings . . . he practised that oneness of life and thought which forms the very basis of his idea of total-unity'.

The result is not easy reading—Solovyev was a seer and a sage, and such are never 'easy'. But the book merits all the careful study it requires, for the light it throws on Solovyev, on Russia, and on the problems that beset mankind. Dr Munzer lets his material speak for itself, and indulges in no prophecies: 'The age which Humanism ushered in is now being buried under the ruins of a whole continent and a new conception of man must be evolved. Solovyev's ethics and aesthetics pose this problems even more uncompromisingly than does his speculative philosophy. We believe that, after Solovyev, a return to traditional anthropology has become impossible. But on what plane the spiritual meeting of East and West will eventually take place, no one can know at the present moment.'

The editor of the book has added a warning footnote to the identification of Pseudo-Dionysius with the Areopagite on page 16, and he might well have done the same elsewhere: for example, for the references to the 'formal declaration of schism' by Cerularius (p. 49), to 'rebaptism and reconfirmation' (p. 93), and to the 'Malachian prophecies' (p. 103; where surely *Pater Romanus* is a slip for *Petrus Romanus*). But a more serious omission is of a list of English translations of works by Solovyev, available in libraries if not in bookshops; indeed, a list of translations into French would not have been out of place either. In considering Solovyev's relations with the Roman Catholic Church, the reader should refer, not only to Mgr d'Herbigny's *Vladimir Soloviev* (Washbourne, 1918), but also to S. L. Frank's introduction and appendix I to *A Solovyov Anthology* (S.C.M. Press, 1950).

DONALD ATTWATER