

POUR TOUTE ÂME VIVANT EN CE MONDE. By Gaston Bardet. (Librairie d'Art, Paris.)

It is an encouraging sign that in our over-activist age more and more people, especially also among the laity, are drawn to the contemplative life. Yet there are unfortunately also dangers in this trend. M. Bardet is an architect and father of a family who discovered mysticism comparatively late in life and fell for it headlong. In the years that followed this discovery he seems to have read almost the whole mystical literature of Christendom from the Fathers of the Desert to Teresa of Lisieux, and perhaps it is not surprising that this one-sided diet should have produced something like spiritual indigestion, in the quite literal sense of remaining undigested. In his enthusiasm for his discovery he urges on all and sundry the mystic life, and this means for him ecstasies and the highest phenomena of the unitive way, for he considers that 'the ecstatic union is the normal way of perfection'. (p. 32.) Indeed, he wants to form an élite of Christian families into a 'Chevalerie mystique'—a somewhat self-conscious undertaking, to say the least. He thinks that married couples, whose homes form 'a veritable little hermitage, a shelter where the noises and agitations of the world die down' (p. 19), are the natural apostles of the contemplative life, for 'experience has shown that nothing prevents married laymen from practising all day long perpetual prayer by loving ejaculations' (p. 16). The world in which M. Bardet lives seems to differ somewhat from that in which most people in Western Europe have to work out their salvation. Hence this book, mostly a tissue of citations, has little value for just the people for whom it is intended. Indeed, we read in it such comments as this: 'Happy epoch (of St Thomas, who prevented himself from feeling pain by an effort of concentration) when ecstasy was wisely considered a normal faculty, a refuge almost always offered to souls desirous of the divine union' (p. 125). Surely this kind of *exalté* devotion to ecstasy as an anaesthetic can only lead to grave spiritual disorders. The need for balance and commonsense is nowhere more urgent than in the mystical life, and these are sadly absent from the book under review.

HILDA C. GRAEF

MACHINE TRANSLATION OF LANGUAGES. Edited by W. N. Locke and A. D. Booth. (Chapman and Hall; 48s.)

Linguists do not as a rule take kindly to science, and so competent translations of scientific articles are expensive and hard to come by. With the recent influx of Russian technical work the problem has become acute, and one of the solutions being considered consists of replacing the human translator by an electronic machine. No one sup-