

REVIEWS

MISSION TO THE POOREST. By M. R. Loew, O.P. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

This is the sort of book that makes one thoroughly ashamed of oneself. If only for that reason, it should be read by every Christian, and, in particular, by every Christian priest. Criticisms there may be, though one hesitates to make them about a man like Père Loew and his work among the dockers of Marseilles. It is so easy, too easy, to sit back comfortably with *Mission to the Poorest* propped up before one, and pick holes in the enthusiastic methods of this group of men on fire with the charity which the grace of the gospel has kindled within them. What man, and especially what priest or Christian, could remain deaf to the sighs that rise from the depths and call for justice and a spirit of brotherly collaboration in a world ruled by a just God? Such deafness would be culpable and unjustifiable before God. While we must be resolute in our fight against error, we must also be full of sympathy for those who err, and open-minded in our understanding of their aspirations, hopes and motives.

I have been told, or maybe have read somewhere, that Cardinal Suhard said to his young priests that he was concerned less with their possible mistakes, their errors of judgment, than with their zeal. 'Get a move on', he told them in effect; 'I don't care *what* you do, but *do* something to spread the truth of Christ. If you go too far, or stray from what is prudent, I will tell you where you are wrong. Meanwhile make full use of the graces you received at ordination.'

What the Abbé Godin did for the 'Mission de Paris', the Abbé Michonneau for the parish of Colombes, has been done, *mutatis mutandis*, by Père Loew in Marseilles. The story of his work, so ably translated by Pamela Carswell, and framed by an introduction and epilogue by Maisie Ward, is the old one of the Grasshopper and the Ant. . . . but with a difference. The ant worth his salt must be ready, when occasion demands, to become a grasshopper among grasshoppers.
D.S.

VESSEL OF CLAY. By Leo Trese. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Few things are more difficult than to preach to one's fellow-priests. Fr Trese has adopted the device of preaching to himself and letting us overhear him. He sets down in a diary his reflections on the priestly life. The time covered is one day, from 6.30 a.m. to 11.45 p.m.; and the place is America. If this is a typical day, then it is no wonder that American priests die young. The diary is plainly artificial, but if the reader can accept the convention, he will derive much profit from Fr

Trese's meditations. He deals many a shrewd blow at clerical weaknesses, though his ascetical practices do not sit very easily on him. (At his time of life he ought to know, without debate, whether an afternoon rest is a necessity or an indulgence.) Moreover, his book seems to derive from the pre-liturgical age. Liturgy is not an optional extra in the same class as confraternities and guilds.

However, the framework is artificial, as we have said, and perhaps these are not Fr Trese's real habits or opinions at all. Incidentally, it must be a very long time since the genuine spiritual diary of a priest was published. We are remarkably reticent, perhaps wisely.

The cost of the book is too high, the dust-cover is attractive, the 'blurb' bloated.

J.D.C.

MYSTERY MAN. By Aloysius Roche. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

The main criticism of this book is that it is entirely negative. It is written in the racy, spicy style of a gossip column of a Sunday newspaper. You read of the kind of family a priest normally comes from, the boy he probably was, the studies he did, the clothes he wears, the money he has, the number of visits attending the dying may entail, but you will read nothing of the ideal of the Catholic priesthood, nothing of the mystery of the 'Mystery Man'. A non-Catholic reader would draw the legitimate conclusion that the Catholic priest is no more than the Catholic version of the Jewish priest or Protestant minister—there is nothing to show that the Catholic priesthood is specifically unique.

Irritating phrases abound: 'The Church introduced celibacy under pressure of what she conceived to be the common or greater good' (p. 118). 'The parochial clergy may not attain to any very elevated degree of contemplative prayer, but the kind of life they are required to lead would seem to justify the presumption that they are not called to such heights' (p. 141)—and the peculiar justification of that statement, 'difficulties might arise if there were. . . any general addiction to visions, transports or ecstasies' (ibid). 'When priests become sceptics or rationalists. . . .' (p. 176).

There are a lot of gossipy anecdotes in this very belittling book on the Catholic Priest, the *raison d'être* of which one cannot fathom.

TERENCE TANNER.

APOLOGETICS FOR THE PULPIT. By Aloysius Roche. (Burns Oates; 18s.)

This work was published shortly before the war, in three volumes, and it is an indication of its usefulness that the publishers should have decided to reprint it in an omnibus edition. There are no changes from the earlier edition. There are three sections, each of forty chapters. The first is called 'The Grounds of Belief,' and discusses the existence of God, sin and redemption, revelation, our Lord, and the Blessed