

Book Reviews

Shuster touches on very lightly and very entertainingly; but his conclusions are not always definite and he has a way of losing us in a mist of words and strange metaphors: for example, 'Ireland had thrown off not merely the chains of political bondage, but also the numberless safety-pins with which it had been tucked into provincial mental clothing.' And, 'Bloy was a sardonic detective unmasking all opportunism.' 'The modern shyster encourages married couples to throw china and get divorces.' Much of the brilliance and excellence of the book is lost for us—no doubt through our own fault and because of our limitations and not wilful ignorance of an unfamiliar idiom.

C.N.L.

MILLED GRAIN. By Sidney Hopwood. (Heath Cranton; 7/6.)

Anthony Hardmass is an artist; and he is in love with Ida Brendan, who marries him in spite of Margaret Rodney's revelations. (Margaret has saved him from penury, perhaps from suicide, has loved and lost him.) After his marriage he commits further indiscretions and is again sent to prison. His wife's love then turns to hatred, and Margaret alone is his friend. Ida falls in love with a doctor; she has Anthony shadowed, and, on flimsy evidence, obtains a decree nisi, Margaret intervening. The injustice of this brings about a moral shock in Anthony's mind, counteracting one he had received as a boy, and he becomes a reformed character; but Margaret, who has always been a lukewarm (and very ill-instructed) Catholic, enters a nunnery.

Modern art, prison-life, love, pathology, and psycho-analysis, are discussed but not assimilated. There is a suggestion of a difficult, unrevealed problem, but no attempt is made to deal with the thing, and the obscurity is unpleasant. Nearly all the chapters are prefaced by quotations, often irrelevant to and always far weightier than the matter introduced. One character, the very minor Mrs. Canon, really lives. One situation, the law-court scene, is entirely convincing. The descriptions are fulsome. Catholicism plays no integral part and should have been left out. And the diction is thoroughly bad. '... a strong firm hand, covered as to the back with wiry hair,' and 'He had intensive psychism pre-eminently to express,' are illustrative of the author's unskilful use of words.

It looks as if Mr. Hopwood has neglected the art of writing in favour of the copy-book technique of novel-making, and that is why *Milled Grain* is the antithesis of the Catholic novel.

R.R.