

Thus Lent provides a progressive course of doctrinal instruction, and not the least of the merits of Fr. Pepler's book is its insistence on this showing-forth of the truths of faith in the liturgical setting. Too often liturgical writers are absorbed in the symbol itself and not in what is symbolised—nothing less than the whole variegated life of the Mystical Body. The notion that there are, as it were, two realities—the liturgical 'as against' the dogmatic—is wholly destroyed in this rich commentary on the total life of the Church as revealed in the days of Lent. The homilies of the Fathers, the consideration of the ceremonial context, the infused understanding of mystics, practical conclusions for the life of prayer—all these have a natural place in an approach that rises above the textual and historical level: not indeed so as to ignore the concrete fact of the action done, the words uttered, but so as to absorb them in the Church itself, in which nothing that is of God can be alien.

A future edition might well print citations from the readings in italics, so as to bring out more forcibly the counterpoint of text and commentary. An indication of the stational church each day would be useful, as would a more detailed list of contents. A bibliography might assist those who wish to turn to the sources on which the author draws with such discernment.

It is greatly to be hoped that Fr. Pepler may now turn to the rest of the liturgical year, using the same methods which are indeed the indispensable ones for understanding the Church's public worship as the expression of its work as the teacher of all Truth. In the meantime, this commentary on the Lenten readings must be welcomed as a notable contribution to liturgical literature. When one thinks of the paucity of books of this sort in English, it is a matter for thankfulness that in America, at least, paper is being put to good use by Catholic publishers.

D.A.E.

**FIRE-WEED.** A Novel by Naomi Royde Smith. (Macmillan; 10s. 6d.)

The fire-weed grows in the ruins of burned-out houses: its red spikes were the first of this war's memorials. There could be no apter title for Miss Royde Smith's new novel of sixty years in the life of an English county family. The book ends with a blitz in London, at the moment when it seems that the personal failures of Rufus Greyne, the painter of genius who is the novel's central character, are to be resolved at last. Death comes to Lise, the dancer to whom he is reunited after twenty years of unfulfilment. That is the answer: that and the flower that grows out of destruction.

This is a novel on a generous scale: the life at Michaelsford, where the Greyne's have lived since the days of Elizabeth, with the ample parties for jubilees and comings-of-age; life at Beauminster, the ancient public school to which the sons go in their turn; life in Paris studios and London galleries; Greece in 1939 and Bristol and Lon-

don in 1941. But like Michaelsford itself, the rambling structure is strictly true to a pattern. And that pattern is the growth of an artist, from the boy scribbling alone in the nursery to the acknowledged master seeing in the end where the colour of flowers and their meaning meet.

Readers of *Jake* and *Mildensee* will remember with what understanding Miss Royde Smith wrote of music, how nearly she closed the elusive gap between the artist's experience and the communication of it. In *Fire-Weed*, with that dexterity which must be the despair of most other novelists, she does the same for painting. Rufus's pictures are not externalised achievements, merely: his failure to solve the anguish of his personal life is all the time thrust against the background of his painting, assured and strong. It is as though words have been invoked to show the inadequacy of words. But there is nothing vague in the writing: a resolute economy only, massing the strong colours of the story, grouping its sharply marked figures—all to serve the total picture, the portrait of Rufus Greyne.

*Fire-Weed* is full of lively incident—family rows and scenes in restaurants; full, too, of acutely observed characters—Lady Emily, the professional egoist secure in the Michaelsford bed; Lise, the Boulogne *fille du boulanger* who ran away with the gipsy; Eustace, the diplomat. Yet it is Rufus who remains in the memory, and that is as it should be, for it is he who sees the flower where death has been.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

A HOUSE IN BRYANSTON SQUARE. By Algernon Cecil. (Eyre and Spottiswood; 10s.).

There are some books (Amiel's *Journal*, Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*, Aubrey's *Miscellanies* are among these) which exercise a peculiar excluding charm over certain people who feel that even if they have not exactly written these words themselves nobody else has ever read them with quite so complete an appreciation. Mr. Algernon Cecil's *A House in Bryanston Square* may quite well prove to belong to this rare and secretly cherished class. Its main theme is an elaboration of the Neo-Platonic belief that there are emanations from the Divine Being which are scarcely tainted with any defect; its subject is one of these beings; its background and framework the house, once that spirit's casket, now blown to dust by a direct hit from a high explosive bomb some years after the lovely inhabitant had died.

All the harvests of wide reading, instructed travel and of a gradually increasing religious faith attained through an analysis of the thought of the giants of Belief, enrich the reconstruction of a companionship which seems, on the evidence of this book's pages, to have grown closer since the bodily presence of one partner to it has gone. Aristotle; Aquinas; Dante; Pascal; Santayana and many