

## *Blackfriars*

that this misfortune is *not* 'inherent in sex as such,' but is a consequence of man's Fall. He speaks rather hazily of 'compensation' for this submerging of the spiritual faculties, by means of a 'transformation' of sex by love. Here we are tempted to carp. It must be insisted that there can be no impurity which is not ultimately reduceable to the *abuse* of sex; and we dislike any talk of a 'transformation' of sex, remembering that transformation implies destruction of the thing to be transformed. Perhaps the translation is here at fault, for we are assured that this love 'does not act as a force which remains outside the physical event and conquers it from without . . . but makes the physical event an expression of itself.' Still, we find this theory of 'compensation' a trifle obscure, and also somewhat exacting. We recall with gratitude the wiser comfort of St. Thomas: 'The conjugal act prevents the use of reason on account of the accompanying bodily orgasm. But no moral fault follows from this, provided it be performed in accord with reason, for reason itself requires that the use of reason be sometimes interrupted' (1a, 2ae, 34, 1, ad 1m.)

The second half of the book, treating of Christian virginity, calls for nothing but unstinting praise. It should be exceedingly helpful, not only to those who seek a reliable statement of the Catholic doctrine, but also to priests who are called upon to give conferences to religious. Much use of the Fathers is made, but we miss any reference to the singularly beautiful and appropriate *De Virginitate* of St. Gregory of Nyssa.

The author does not so much as mention birth-control or any other of the countless particular problems with which we are harassed to-day. His only purpose is to clarify the principles by which such details are to be judged. It is this that justifies the publishers when they say that 'a book along the lines of this one has been too long in coming.' There have been signs that, in our embarrassments, we have been forgetting the wood for trees.

Some readers may find the unrelieved earnestness of the book tiresome, and find fault with its seeming abstract remoteness from everyday doubts and difficulties. We urge them to persevere, confident that with careful reading and thought they will be enabled to view these things in a new and truer perspective.

V.W.

TRAGEDY UNDER LUCIFER. By Anthony Crossley (Christophers: 5/-)

This pastoral poem is preceded by an essay in defence of modern poetry, dealing with the causes of its present-day ne-

## Book Reviews

glect and with 'the fundamentals of poetry at all times and in all places.' Mr. Crossley justly insists that since 'beauty cannot be courted with the facile flirtation of the dilettante,' contemporary poets are entitled to a measure of attention before their works are appraised; and that the difficulty of certain of them is no way undesirable, since it implies no more than 'that not many people having experienced emotions similar to the poet's, proportionately few can immediately grasp the significance of his meaning.' Rightly, too, does the author stress the fact that the contents of a poem should be imagined by the reader, and emphasize the importance of form as a guide to that emotional content. Finally he takes comfort in the general signs of a new desire for beauty, and accordingly disagrees with Mr. Herbert Read's less optimistic conclusions on the future of poetry. The poem itself is a legend of the contest between Marsyas and Apollo. How much of it is genuinely mythological and how much due to Mr. Crossley, is a question which the consultation of many authorities has not answered for me. This, however, in no way lessens my appreciation of the poem. In the verse, words wear an air of inevitability; rhyme appears or disappears so fittingly that its presence is not an awkward intrusion or its absence a regrettable vacancy; and rhythm quickens or falters according to the mood to be expressed. The author's technique responds admirably to the demands of the finely dramatic movement of the poem. There is the strength and beauty in the poem that comes from the 'power of imaginative experience.'

R.H.

**THE GOLDEN LEGEND OVERSEAS.** (Burns, Oates and Washbourne; 6/-.)

With small trouble we may soon be aware of the expansion of the Church in the missionary continents, with accompanying signs which recall vividly the three first passionate centuries of our history, not to say sometimes the Acts of the Apostles; and to be stirred from the lethargic support we give to that movement, generous though we may think it. Three periodicals, to mention so few (and there are enough to stock a railway book-stall), insignificant externally: African Missions of the White Fathers, African Missions (both of Ore Place, Hastings), Mrs. Thomas's Missionary News Letter (3b Morpeth Terrace, S.W.1) are enough to stimulate us to prayer and sacrifice, teach us what faith may be to those who place no obstacle to its operation and show the vastness of the field and the whiteness of the unreaped harvest.