

JOY OUT OF SORROW. By Mother Marie des Douleurs. (Newman; \$1.50.)

This is 'a book of conferences originally addressed by the Prioress-General to members of her institute, a religious order for the sick'. But from end to end of the book, there is nothing here for nuns only. This is a book, then, for the Christian sick, formally under vows or not. The teaching of it is morally meat and drink to them. Mother Marie des Douleurs is a mother writing, who knows that teaching is a kind of food. She teaches as a mother does, with firmness, understanding and persuasion, with endless humour and stout realism, with wisdom and sure insight, dealing out the rich truth as it is needed, for correction, for comfort and for growth.

There are mopping-up operations dealing with the commoner vices of the sick. Illness is often 'a subtle school of selfishness'. 'This monster of selfishness that a sick person can become is frightful to contemplate. . . . The only cause in the world is his health. And there are some who have the sacrilegious audacity to believe that under such conditions one is capable of loving God! Impossible.' An examination of conscience is the more sensitive and searching as we are to suppose it will do for sick nuns, too!

But not for nothing does the author refer in paragraph one to that threat that rears at the very brink of the dependent state of illness, the threat of the lapse and lessening of personality. 'Don't you feel that you have to struggle if you are to stay yourselves?' The first and endless fight for the sick is morally to *be*, to *will*, and, if possible at all, to work. But 'living, for the sick, means, as it does for everyone, acting and conquering. To settle down into our suffering, to talk about it, to think about it, to glory in it—all this only results in our plunging ourselves into a life of illusion, a life that is false beyond redemption. . . . Resignation is good only if it acts as a kind of spring; . . . Illness . . . is a tool.' 'We still have an obligation to live, to live with all our souls. To do this, we must adapt ourselves to our condition. Living means both enduring and fighting back.' This book is a great lead precisely to that great rally of the sick to claim and to play their part in God's plan. The sick are led up out of the depths, through humility and honesty, on to a courage and joy that is evidently the note of the new Institute of Jesus Crucified.

This religious society then is founded right down among the roots of life. And fittingly it seems, it was founded by a Pole (the Poles know about courage and Mother Marie des Douleurs was Suzanne Wrotnowska), with a Benedictine accent on work, in Paris in 1930 when what someone has called the age of pain was setting in. But in these conferences there are no heroics and no romancings and

no sentimentality at all. The sick are soberly and gently taught to be responsible and humble, and then gradually but surely taught to be what God invites them to be—contemplatives and apostles. Here is the broad (broad as the world) but steep way up out of the grey subworld of the sick. Morally and spiritually it is too often a grey subworld, brightly though the electric lights may shine on well-laundered linen.

The conferences on the great feasts are a delight. They are so strong and cogent because Christian suffering, too, deals in realities.

The translation is vigorous and lively. Idioms, indeed, tend to go off like squibs. But the grace of the author's manner and the compelling interest of the matter surmount and survive a curious eclectic English of very widely miscellaneous idiom, that strains to convey the very contemporary flavour and colour of the original.

MARY JACKSON

THE SILENT REBELLION: Anglican Religious Communities, 1845-1900.  
By A. M. Allchin. (S.C.M.; 25s.)

The religious communities established in the Church of England in the middle years of the nineteenth century expressed a 'silent rebellion' in two ways. Firstly, at the natural and human level, their devoted works of practical charity among the poor were a mute protest against public complacency over social conditions, and against the restrictions which convention placed on the activity of women. 'To a young woman wishing to engage in full-time social welfare work, in nursing or teaching, the Anglican sisterhoods offered opportunities which were not easily found in the world in general. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the fact that the general development of Christian monasticism, from contemplation to activity, from male to female, was reversed in the case of the revival in the Church of England.' It was their response to the social needs of the time which commended the sisters to such people as Florence Nightingale and F. D. Maurice, and ultimately to the general body of opinion in the Church of England.

At that time only a few far-sighted Anglicans—such as R. M. Benson, founder of the 'Cowley Fathers'—realized that the primary motive and principal significance of religious is not what they do, but what they are: they represent the folly of the cross, the rejection of the values of this world. This was the second aspect of the 'silent rebellion'—a more profoundly disturbing one, since it was against the spiritual complacency prevalent in a Church which had been 'depressed and enfeebled by the loss of the full meaning of the idea of sacrifice and of a consecrated life during three centuries'. In the long run, it was their supernatural motive, rather than their active works, which made the