

HILAIRE BELLOC: NO ALIENATED MAN. By Frederick Wilhelmsen. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Until a full-length critical biography of Belloc appears, work like Mr Wilhelmsen's is important to keep the memory fresh. It is a pity, however, that a tribute to one of England's finest prose writers is itself often disfigured with clumsy syntax and odd neologisms. But Belloc did not confuse grammar and truth, and it would be untrue to him to allow its clumsiness to hide the wisdom of this book. The theme is in the title: Belloc was a man in tune with reality. He was not a man of books, of society, of the world, of religion; yet he was all of these. He found the truth of history in men and stones as well as in books. So the boisterous cult of liquor was not the essence of Belloc; it was just a way of saying that the seamless web of truth may not be torn, it must be sought in the bar parlour as well as the library. Mr Wilhelmsen does not try to canonize his hero; he sees, for instance, the limitations of 'Europe, is the Faith'. He suggests that Belloc has a secret (suffering, probably) that we do not know about. He is content to study Belloc as a man, a historian and a Christian, with a glance over his shoulder at 'the man of letters'. It is a pity he did not notice the poetry, because there the old mariner flew a few signals which betrayed him; and they are not difficult to decode, either. One remembers *Courtesy*, for instance, a ballade celebrating the Christian's reverence for all creatures from a worm to an angel. Or lines like those to Evenlode that
'binds my heart to English ground'.

For the rumbustious Grizzlebeard was a reverent man and wheedled life's secrets out by his reverence. When the whole tale is told we shall probably find the heart of the man less in his noisy blustering and more in his humble acceptance of old age and the love of friends.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE MODULOR. By Le Corbusier. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

All through his working life Le Corbusier has been absorbed by the problem of measurement. In order to understand the central position which it occupies for him we must recall his use of the analogy with music. The musical scale as we know it is a heritage from the Bach family. Since sound in itself is infinitely variable the actual determination of the scale was an arbitrary act, but—as it has turned out—a most fortunate and influential one, for it has become so much a part and parcel of our musical thinking that we can hardly conceive of music in any other terms.

But in our determination of linear measurement we have been conspicuously less fortunate. We began sensibly enough with the human foot, but we omitted to standardize, with the result that the foot acquired

different values in different parts of the world. Impatience with the nuisance thus caused led the French Revolutionaries to make a new start with the metre, a measurement which, though possessing the great mathematical advantage of the decimal system, had no sanction in the human body (originally it was one forty-millionth of the meridian of the world through Paris). Thus it happened that in our modern world we have come to be torn between two warring linear scales, neither of which deserves unqualified approval.

Le Corbusier is apparently resigned to the continued use of these two scales—at least for the time being; but proposes instead the use of a system of proportion which can be practised in either scale and which is based, on the one hand on the human body (to be precise, on the human body of a six-foot London policeman), and on the other on the Golden Mean (i.e. the division of a measure in such a way that the smaller part is to the larger as the larger is to the whole).

It is not possible to do justice to this idea in a review. Le Corbusier has tried out his system with resolute consistency on all the projects which come his way—projects which vary from the design of packing-cases for fruit to the planning grid for new cities. We in this country are concerned with the same basic problems but, characteristically, we approach them from the other end. In place of making a 'sublime election' we prefer—at least in the sphere of architecture and building—to record the factors which have a bearing on measured parts in the hope that considerations of the practical order will provide us with the key. But it is by no means certain that we are right.

LANCE WRIGHT

FINANCIAL JUSTICE. By J. F. L. Bray, PH.D. (Aquinas Paper No. 22, Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

Financial justice is not a specific form of justice, but must needs fall within the context of one or other of the known kinds of general or particular justice. The paper is concerned to show, by a display of statistics, the injustices that are involved in practical applications of capitalism. The three main headings are: I, Interest; II, Creation of Money; and III, Profits. The inexpert reader may be forgiven if the findings appear to him inconclusive, and do not point to any constructive remedy. Because money as a medium of exchange is unfruitful, it does not follow that in its secondary use as an instrument of production it is equally fruitless. (cf. Aquinas, 2a-2ae, 78, I, 6.) Again, the sharing of profits in a partnership is not to be identified with money-lending for gain. In Church Law certain monies must be fruitfully invested. All interest-bearing is not therefore in principle against justice, nor is the profit motive necessarily contaminated by greed.

A.F.