

clothes ideas of great value. The 'greatest treasure' is the gift of Faith, and Father Kearney discusses first of all the meaning of this gift to a Catholic, and his explanation of our obligations is redolent of a profound personal gratitude to God; while his obvious pride in being a Catholic never leads him to assume either an intolerant or a superior attitude to non-Catholics. The danger of mixed marriages, of modern snares such as the cinema, radio and press is trenchantly condemned. The chapter on the instruction of children and family influence in fostering the gift of Faith is outstanding, consisting for the most part of quotations from Papal declarations on the responsibilities of parents in this matter. It says all there is to be said on the subject, but which, unhappily, is not said often enough. We might well take a leaf out of Hitler's book and present a copy of some such symposium of Catholic teaching on the family to all newly married couples.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE BISHOP'S CONFESSION. By Hugh Shearman. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

There is much to be said for the gentle deceit of a novelist who 'edits' an autobiography. The conventions of fiction—for they are not dead—should be eminently dispensable; in their place the emphasis may fall entirely on the tension within a man, on that immanent agony of memory and motive which may never reach out to the full responsibility of action, but which is yet most wholly human and which the novelist may most properly seek to unfold.

Mr. Shearman's book is a memoir found among the papers of the late Right Revd. Percival MacPeake, D.D., Lord Bishop of the United Diocese of Bangor, Dungannon and Strabane. Childhood in the prosperous home of a Belfast linen-merchant, Trinity, Dublin, curacies in their accustomed order, a comfortable rectory and finally the bishopric of the Protestant Church of Ireland—the story, one supposes, is not so strange. But the successful career is only the ironical backcloth to a tragedy which is none the less profound for its hiddenness. The torment of a child awakening, in his small but vivid world, to the paradox of things does not die away, but expands as the years pass, so that faith itself fails, and there is left 'free choice . . . a process that will never be done while there is life and movement. It has no rules, and its course can never be inevitably defined. It runs with the movement of life. It is true, living religion.'

Mr. Shearman is not concerned to point a moral, and the real greatness of his novel lies in its subtle and convincing portrait of a sincere man's attempt to reconcile the war of the mind with an external calm and propriety of career. And yet the bishop is not a hypocrite. He recognises the problem, and takes the advice of the

film actress with whom he falls in love so improbably—‘Just look into yourself and understand how you’re resisting the movement of things.’

It would be unfair to compare *The Bishop's Confession* with Bernanos's *Curé de Campagne*, for Mr. Shearman has the harder task. The only tradition that can safeguard the bishop is an elaborate convention; he has not come to that cosmic sense of a shared suffering, of a world broken and yet redeemed, which lies deep beneath the curé even in his agony. This is not to say that Mr. Shearman has failed. His novel is memorable; but perhaps its terms of reference are not ultimate ones. But it is sensitive, plainly written, with an awareness in recollection that one does not often find.

X.

## NOTICES

THE TRANSITION FROM WAR TO PEACE. By A. C. Pigou.

BRITAIN'S FUTURE POPULATION. By R. F. Harrod. (Oxford University Press; 6d. each.)

These pamphlets are numbers H.3 and H.4 of the Oxford Series On Home Affairs. The former deals with the problems that will arise when the war machine goes into reverse gear. The prospect of the return to peace-time production and peace-time employment (or its opposite) are discussed, and the author ends on an optimistic note, believing that relative prosperity may be maintained on the foundations of our previous economic strength. The second pamphlet is impressive chiefly by reason of the emphasis it lays on the ugly facts of our national lack of reproductiveness, the birth and death rate ratio and the truth that a shrinking community grows poorer not richer. The remedies proposed by the author, however, do not impress us sufficiently to assuage our alarm. Both pamphlets have the virtue of brevity.

J. F. T. PRINCE.

VICTOR HUGO ET LES ILLUMINES DE SON TEMPS. Par Auguste Viatte. (Editions de l'arbre; \$1.50.)

This book requires more than one reading. Under stress of war a second reading is impossible since a second reading entails a quietude unhappily impossible to-day. For the hundred French students who have heard Cagliostro have ten heard of the Abbé Constant of *La Dernière Incarnation*? Have ten heard of Charles Fourier, of Henri Delaage, and of the school of Hoëné Wronski? Yet would *Contemplations* have been written but for that strange background of Revolution and illuminism that was Literary France in mid-nineteenth century?

G.A.F.