

## REVIEWS

interpreting Franco's Spain to the breed. His scope is far more ambitious than Mr. Wall's: it is to give a thorough account of the origins and development of the struggle. He brings into the foreground the hitherto neglected factor of the virtues and vices of the Spanish temperament, and his interpretations of this are frank and shrewd. Readers of Señor Mendizabal's *The Martyrdom of Spain* will note the omission of consideration of some serious factors which contributed to the final breach of Right and Left, which are less creditable to the Rights. But, on the whole, Mr. Sencourt's analysis is fair and penetrating—particular attention may be called to his stress on the sex-factor in the Spanish hatred for the Church and clergy—but the effect is apt to be marred by occasional lyrical outbursts in the worst propagandist manner which detract from the general seriousness of his work (e.g., p. 51: "This [Jesuit] enterprise in modernising Spain was to be strangled to death because of its connection with the name of *Jesus*."') The final summing up is splendid, especially the concluding words:

" . . . many foreigners, some in contemptuous indifference, some for reasons of strong conviction, preferred to think of a compromise. For Spaniards, however, that was beyond the horizon, because they are still unchanged in their tumultousness, their valour, their pride and their excess. But even when compromise is not practical, peace can still be built on wisdom and justice. There is no other foundation on which we can build peace in Spain—or anywhere.

"If instead of hardening each side in its propaganda and its hatred, the partisans of either side would plead, each with his own, the claims of truth, and the safety and welfare of the people, hope would have more substance. For in Spain, even more than elsewhere, it is not the system of the doctrinaire which matters, but the man himself, the man of flesh and blood, of mind and soul.

"It is a questionable service to this man to kill, or even to maim him. It is one thing to offer progress, or salvation, to Spain, and another to reduce it to desolation."

Mr. Wall's book is rounded off with an apt postscript on *W. H. Auden and Spanish Civilisation*.

HENRY GORDON.

MIEKE, LA FIANCÉE DU COIN DU DIABLE. Par Philippe Mosane.

(Desclée, de Brouwer; pp. 214, n.p.)

This is the story of a girl who lived in the "Devil's Corner" of Brussels, where God was called "Henri" (INRI) and there was enough faith to say "Henry was sending it down" when it rained, but where also, with Latin realism, the Devil was carried in procession on his Feast Day.

Mieke, or Mary, deserted by her father (who had savaged a sick wife till she died), was living on her own in Brussels in her 'teens. She was initiated to Socialism young, made progress in

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it towards Communism, had a most successful troop of Faucons Rouges, was sent to international congresses and helped to entertain famous Communists and political exiles in Brussels.

But her soul did not fit Belgian Socialism. She loved air and the sea and cleanliness. Her Faucons were more scouts than little Reds. She went camping in preference to street rioting, though she took a good part in the latter and was specially trained in the particular form of slap adopted by the Socialist girls. When she went camping she took a revolver to keep off "vauriens." Hers was a life of grim realities.

All this strenuous life, and the equally strenuous task of making a living in the wretched conditions of a worker's life, was carried on in spite of a tubercular chest which had her in and out of hospital and left her early with only one lung working.

She broke with Socialism because she was let down by it. She gave every spare penny to extent of starving herself to others, and then found that when she was in need none of her Socialist friends would help her. They would not even return loans, but cynically asked her if she had an I.O.U. She and her fiancé, Nel, dropped out of socialism.

Shortly after that she was in hospital. Some Catholic girls, especially a group of Jocistes in the ward, showed her a new spirit in suffering and Christian friendship. After sleepless nights of struggling with prejudice and visions of what she must give up, and with her youth which would not admit her sickness, she made her first Communion and from thenceforward was a Catholic, as she had been Communist, with no half-heartedness.

She went to Lourdes. But it was to pray for her fiancé's conversion and to offer her life for it. Here she attracted the attention of "M'sieu l'Abbé" (anonymous) who unearthed her story and visited her when back in Brussels. Her offering was accepted. While she was in Lourdes her fiancé decided to become a Catholic. He was received into the Church with spirited rejoicings at the Jocist Centrale.

During the remainder of her short life Mieke suffered. She was as she said one of the Jocistes "who cannot work, but offer their life and sufferings for the work of others." Nel, her fiancé, guarded her all the time he was off work, was by her early morning and often watching through the night when she was in agony in her garret in the Devil's Corner. The Jocistes sent their sickness service representatives and a cooked dinner daily from the Centrale Restaurant. When she died they turned out in force to do her honour, for her heroism and cheerfulness was a byword among them.

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In the book stands out the heroic devotion of Nel, who was married to her by special dispensation a day or two before her death when she was almost unconscious.

The story reads in places like a fantasy—of how the King and Queen of the Belgians made friends with her in a hospital in Switzerland, of how the Papal Nuncio came to the Devil's Corner to confirm her. But it is vouched for as true. And it is enlivened although by the Bruxellois words of Mieke, a stuffy, graphic language which could only be translated into Cockney. She called God "Henry" in her prayers by choice, that was the way of the Devil's Corner. She upset the piety of many conversations with "M'sieu l'Abbée" by her astonishing remarks about matters of religion. But it was language, not the faith, that was queer. The whole book is an heroic example of Faith and cheerfulness in a young worker who found new life in the Church and the J.O.C.

FINBAR SYNNOTT, O.P.

## EDUCATION

LE CARACTERE DU JEUNE HOMME. By Mgr. Tihamer Toth.  
(Editions Salvator, Mulhouse; 15 frs.)

The formation of character in the young entails a positive development of natural instincts, and is not confined to uprooting evil. It is before all else a creative activity. What has been implanted by nature must be fostered and allowed to grow along set lines. The type of educational propaganda and "spiritual" book which neglects this side of the question and treats exclusively of the negative elements of repression has of late grown into disrepute, and the reaction has given rise to many unbalanced and unco-ordinated theories of education and the formation of character. For this reason a book which sets out the various elements of the Christian life in their true perspective for young men is all the more welcome. Mgr. Toth is concerned to emphasise the positive actions which go to the formation of character; while recognising the presence of evil he does not allow the negative element, mortification and the rest, to be unnoticed. But it has its appointed place in the whole scheme. It is only applied in so far as it is necessary to bring about an end which is attained primarily by the development and control of the will and by the ordered use of natural powers in ordinary human work.

Throughout the book the development of the human will as a basis of character is emphasised; yet this insistence of sheer will-power does not impart an atmosphere of stark unreality—chiefly