

do if she let more of the empyrean—or even more of the earth—in upon the dead level little world she usually chooses to write about. Actually she breaks out twice in *First Love*, which reprints eleven tales from *Kissing the Rod*—now out of print—and eight new ones. In *Pastoral* something of the primeval constancy of the seasons—for when did Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter ever let you down?—begins to reintegrate the flimsy wife of a farmer who is yearning after an earlier and more exotic lover. In *La Figlia*—an anthology piece if ever there was one!—the Italian peasant widow of an English banker takes her daughters back to her native village in her guise of genteel tourist; and while she, who alone knows the true position, sustains her role, neither of the girls resists the lure of their unknown ancestry. Here are longish short stories and short short stories—a delightful variety of technical accomplishment. And while *Pastoral* and *La Figlia*, which belong to the former group, are outstanding, it is not so much for their style—for all have style—as for their matter.

H. P. E.

LEON BLOY, the Pauper Prophet. By Emanuela Polimeni. (Dennis Dobson; 6s.)

This is a book without perspective, so close is it to its subject: an autobiography rather than a biography, the material arranged subjectively, the sequence of thought determined underground. In its omissions it is perplexing, but, in the sheer quantity of informative material it contains in 118 pages, it is astounding. A very useful little book for the ignorant-converted.

‘If I have succeeded in awakening some interest in this “immoderate genius”, it is not that readers’ ears should be strained not to miss one blast from his trumpet, but rather that they should be attuned to catch the echoes of those tears and prayers which this pitiful lover of souls so unceasingly offered up for friends and enemies alike, and whose faith in the Gospel verities led him to look upon the absence of sanctity among the professed followers of Christ as the world’s major disaster.’

The author herself took infinite pains and a true vocational interest in the preparation of this study, which at the time seemed likely to be the first book on Bloy published in England. She died after a short sharp illness before it appeared, an admirable, uncompromising Christian devoted to the cause of making the French Catholic writers of the twentieth century revival known in England. She shared something of Bloy’s own zeal for arousing the faithful from apathy while there is yet time. God rest her soul.

R. B.

MANY DIMENSIONS. By Charles Williams. (Faber; 7s. 6d.)

This is the third volume in the new standard edition of Charles Williams’s novels and the name of the author alone is sufficient recommendation. The publishers do what we have come to expect of Messrs. Faber and Faber in making novel reading a physical as well as spiritual pleasure. Since we can read this edition with comfort

we can the more easily attend to the interlaced spiritual meanings which are of such importance in Mr Williams's writings. Perhaps it is a good omen that these allegories of the conflict of good and evil repay publishing today.

G.M.

A ROSARY CHAIN. By Sister Mary Dominic, O.P., with a Preface by the Very Revd Fr A. Tindal-Atkinson, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 5s. 6d.)

Each mystery of the Rosary is remembered in this gracious book by an appropriate passage of the Sacred Scriptures and by a brief meditation in verse. A method so objective and so *pure* cannot fail to strengthen a prayer that is available to all, and whose efficacy has in our own day received such striking testimony at Lourdes and Fatima. An example of Sister Mary Dominic's verse will serve better than a reviewer's praise to indicate its simple beauty:

THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

*Sorrowing I sought Thee many a day:  
(The day was night when we were far apart).  
I knew not sorrow was Thy wisdom's way  
To lead me to Thy Temple in my heart.*

Hand-set on hand-made paper, *A Rosary Chain* will be the perfect Christian present for all who love the Rosary—or indeed for all who will be glad to be reminded of how white paper can be, and how joyous its marriage with the printer's skill.

I.E.

ROME ET LA RUSSIE AVANT L'INVASION DES TARTARS. By Baron Michel de Taube. Tome I. pp. 176. (Les Editions du Cerf: Blackfriars Publications; 9s.)

In the past twenty-five years a good deal of work has been done on the origins of the Russian nation and of the Christian church in that nation, matters that are very closely associated with one another and are no less complicated and uncertain. Baron Michel de Taube, who was formerly professor of international law in the University of Petersburg, has undertaken to examine the problem afresh in the light of new sources of evidence, and with the particular object of finding out to what extent it is true that the Western church had an active part in the beginnings of Russian Christianity.

His first volume is now published, and it deals with the neglected Varangian prince Askold, the origin of the state of Kiev, and a first conversion (i.e., over a century before Vladimir) of Russians to Christianity, between the years 856 and 882. Baron de Taube's marshalling of the evidence goes to show that Askold, rather than the shadowy Rurik, was the real founder of the Kievan state, and that during his time Christian influence was continuous among the Slavs of the Dniepr and he himself was baptised. (The argument that he took the name Nicholas after the contemporary Pope St Nicholas I is not altogether convincing.) This influence was exercised not only by Christians originating from Constantinople and Bulgaria in the south, but