

last analysis *The Lawless Roads* find their motif in the cataclysm of the impact of the supernatural and in the swaying tension between the life of grace and a human norm. It is a concrete presentation; the 'whiskey priest' in Chiapas, the Christero raid, the mass house at Las Casas, the confessional. But perhaps no other book in English has come so close to the essential spirit of Catholicism.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

CHOSEN RACES. By Margaret Sothorn. Translated by Maisie Ward. (Sheed and Ward; 8s. 6d.)

In this novel Miss Sothorn has reduced Nazism for us from abstract political theories and newspaper reports to a vital system dominating and shaping the lives of its victims.

Throughout the book it overshadows like a vague, but real and inescapable evil, the actions and reactions of every character. Not only do the Jews and practising Christians suffer persecution and oppression, but the Nazi youth itself is brutalised and debased.

The author brings into her story the ordinary people of Germany. Some, like the vile Schorsch, glory in the new animal freedom; others like Liselotte the girl student, assume a hard and metallic manner to protect themselves in a world that has become empty of real values. Others again, like the middle-class elderly folk, are shown to have become neurotic and obsessed, while the sadistically inclined find ample scope in the official ranks of Nazidom to practise a domineering cruelty.

But the real theme of the book lies in the love and sufferings of Frida, the Aryan girl, and Alfred the Jew. Frida, sister of Liselotte, comes from a middle-class home, and is typically bourgeois in character with a sense of poetry and a pity for helpless things. Alfred Rosenthal, a young Jewish astronomer who has been expelled from his post at a university on account of his race, has a beautiful and cultured mother and a tenderhearted father. The impact on each other of these two, so entirely different characters, under the prevailing persecution, is of intense interest. The man is above the average in intellect and his capacity for suffering and sacrifice is boundless. He is the type who can say to the priest, who diffidently begins to talk of miracles, 'I am accustomed to bow before the sublimity of mystery.' (In spite of this, however, his virtual conversion to Christianity is not very convincingly portrayed.) Frida is more limited, and in her dreadful fear when a half Jewish child is to be born of her, shows a selfishness and small-

ness, which is perhaps intensified again by the system under which she lives.

Altogether it is a gripping and dramatic tale, and the author handles her characters and situations with tenderness and skill. She is evidently well conversant with conditions in Germany, and the book is full of vivid pictures and incidents of its present-day life that cannot fail to fascinate and enlighten the reader.

Mention must be made of the strange conversation in an aeroplane, between the Jewish refugee and a Nazi officer, high above the clouds of distrust. They meet as men, and not as representatives of race or political creeds, and a note of hope is struck when the officer expresses the opinion that one day perhaps the Jew would come back to help in the reconstruction of the future Germany.

J. A. Q. DU PREEZ.

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF SAINTS

DAS WAHRE GESICHT DER HEILIGEN. By Wilhelm Schamoni.
(Hegner, Leipzig; RM. 12.50.)

The purpose of this uncommon book is to provide authentic portraits of saints. Ranging through the centuries, from St. Laurence the Martyr to St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus, the author has been singularly successful in the very arduous task of hunting up contemporary and otherwise trustworthy representations of the saints, before the flights of fancy of their admirers had time to superimpose their subjective reactions upon the objective reality of the human physiognomy they tried to recall. That such falsifications have—of course with the most pious of motives and usually quite unintentionally—often taken place, there can be no doubt. During the last fifty years or so mass-production has furthermore monopolized the making of devotional images and flooded the Christian world from China to Peru with the type of treacly, simpering, inane figures, for which the oleograph seems indeed to be the proper medium of reproduction. The way in which the unspoilt artistic sense of millions of innocent Africans and Asiatics (without counting those of Europe and America) has been corrupted by the mass importation of this kind of industrialized Christian art must make the angels weep 'who look upon their faces.'

Fr. Schamoni's book is avowedly a counter-attack on this unreal world of plaster saints and clichés: and one cannot thank him enough for his courageous attempt. His saints live: they are men and women of flesh and blood, many of whom indeed