

## **Blackfriars**

religion'; and the recorder of London, 'drowned in tears,' at last pronounced sentence. Well might the judges seek to hinder the execution, for in London the good priest had worked indefatigably in that year of the plague, 1636.

Father Purdie tells us all that is known of the martyr—a singularly attractive figure—and gives us a clear outline of the troubles that beset Catholics in the reigns of James I and Charles I; troubles within the Church—misunderstandings between seculars and regulars,' 'a whole string of disputes respecting the nature and extent of the jurisdiction of the bishop,' Dr. Richard Smith, 'in sum the war of books and pamphlets waxed so hot and at times so exceeded the moderation of just defence that even non-Catholics were offended.' While all the time Prynne and other Puritans were for forcing the operation of the penal laws and compelling the king to have Catholic priests executed. As for the policy of Charles and Laud at a time when many dreamed of a return of England to the Faith: 'the wrongheadedness of the king, the folly of Canterbury and the exasperation of a Puritan Parliament, strained at last to breaking-point, quickly destroyed the dream.' So the author sums up that critical period in our history.

The body of John Southworth after the martyrdom at Tyburn was rescued by the piety of the Howard family and sent to Douay; in 1793 it was removed to a place of greater safety, and long forgotten was rediscovered; in 1927 Father Purdie himself brought the sacred burden to St. Edmund's College, Ware, and there the remains of the martyr are enshrined. 'The men who made possible our Catholic England of to-day were men of the stamp of Blessed John Southworth, priest and martyr.'

J.C.

**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CURRENT LITERATURE.** By George N. Shuster. (Calvert Series: Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 4/-.)

Mr. George Shuster fits a big subject into a small book in this essay on the connection between the Catholic Faith and Literature. Is the Church's influence on Literature anything more than negative? Is it not sometimes definitely antagonistic? The *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, which the author discusses at length, would seem to indicate a preoccupation with morality and a disregard of literature. Is there such a thing as Catholic literature—any more than there is such a thing as Catholic bread or Catholic butter? These are all questions that Mr.

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Shuster touches on very lightly and very entertainingly; but his conclusions are not always definite and he has a way of losing us in a mist of words and strange metaphors: for example, 'Ireland had thrown off not merely the chains of political bondage, but also the numberless safety-pins with which it had been tucked into provincial mental clothing.' And, 'Bloy was a sardonic detective unmasking all opportunism.' 'The modern shyster encourages married couples to throw china and get divorces.' Much of the brilliance and excellence of the book is lost for us—no doubt through our own fault and because of our limitations and not wilful ignorance of an unfamiliar idiom.

C.N.L.

MILLED GRAIN. By Sidney Hopwood. (Heath Cranton; 7/6.)

Anthony Hardmass is an artist; and he is in love with Ida Brendan, who marries him in spite of Margaret Rodney's revelations. (Margaret has saved him from penury, perhaps from suicide, has loved and lost him.) After his marriage he commits further indiscretions and is again sent to prison. His wife's love then turns to hatred, and Margaret alone is his friend. Ida falls in love with a doctor; she has Anthony shadowed, and, on flimsy evidence, obtains a decree nisi, Margaret intervening. The injustice of this brings about a moral shock in Anthony's mind, counteracting one he had received as a boy, and he becomes a reformed character; but Margaret, who has always been a lukewarm (and very ill-instructed) Catholic, enters a nunnery.

Modern art, prison-life, love, pathology, and psycho-analysis, are discussed but not assimilated. There is a suggestion of a difficult, unrevealed problem, but no attempt is made to deal with the thing, and the obscurity is unpleasant. Nearly all the chapters are prefaced by quotations, often irrelevant to and always far weightier than the matter introduced. One character, the very minor Mrs. Canon, really lives. One situation, the law-court scene, is entirely convincing. The descriptions are fulsome. Catholicism plays no integral part and should have been left out. And the diction is thoroughly bad. '... a strong firm hand, covered as to the back with wiry hair,' and 'He had intensive psychism pre-eminently to express,' are illustrative of the author's unskilful use of words.

It looks as if Mr. Hopwood has neglected the art of writing in favour of the copy-book technique of novel-making, and that is why *Milled Grain* is the antithesis of the Catholic novel.

R.R.