

HILAIRE BELLOC: NO ALIENATED MAN. By Frederick Wilhelmsen. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Until a full-length critical biography of Belloc appears, work like Mr Wilhelmsen's is important to keep the memory fresh. It is a pity, however, that a tribute to one of England's finest prose writers is itself often disfigured with clumsy syntax and odd neologisms. But Belloc did not confuse grammar and truth, and it would be untrue to him to allow its clumsiness to hide the wisdom of this book. The theme is in the title: Belloc was a man in tune with reality. He was not a man of books, of society, of the world, of religion; yet he was all of these. He found the truth of history in men and stones as well as in books. So the boisterous cult of liquor was not the essence of Belloc; it was just a way of saying that the seamless web of truth may not be torn, it must be sought in the bar parlour as well as the library. Mr Wilhelmsen does not try to canonize his hero; he sees, for instance, the limitations of 'Europe, is the Faith'. He suggests that Belloc has a secret (suffering, probably) that we do not know about. He is content to study Belloc as a man, a historian and a Christian, with a glance over his shoulder at 'the man of letters'. It is a pity he did not notice the poetry, because there the old mariner flew a few signals which betrayed him; and they are not difficult to decode, either. One remembers *Courtesy*, for instance, a ballade celebrating the Christian's reverence for all creatures from a worm to an angel. Or lines like those to Evenlode that
'binds my heart to English ground'.

For the rumbustious Grizzlebeard was a reverent man and wheedled life's secrets out by his reverence. When the whole tale is told we shall probably find the heart of the man less in his noisy blustering and more in his humble acceptance of old age and the love of friends.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE MODULOR. By Le Corbusier. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

All through his working life Le Corbusier has been absorbed by the problem of measurement. In order to understand the central position which it occupies for him we must recall his use of the analogy with music. The musical scale as we know it is a heritage from the Bach family. Since sound in itself is infinitely variable the actual determination of the scale was an arbitrary act, but—as it has turned out—a most fortunate and influential one, for it has become so much a part and parcel of our musical thinking that we can hardly conceive of music in any other terms.

But in our determination of linear measurement we have been conspicuously less fortunate. We began sensibly enough with the human foot, but we omitted to standardize, with the result that the foot acquired