

*Heaven's sake* send it to any young Catholic you know anywhere in the world. Or put it in among your Books for the Forces. Please do. It won't fail to help somebody, somewhere; it has that quality, because there is no pretence to it and it is beautifully concrete. It explains things, the sort of things that puzzle people about why they should be Catholic at all, and—by 'he sheer direct way the author sees things—it clears away the silly bamboozlements in the way of living and doing.

The title is misleading; it is not as prim as all that. Why not have called it "Letters to all and sundry"?—for really these might be the best snippets out of letters we keep; they are not decorated and do not get in to a lofty plane to stay there in lengthy disquisitions; spades are spades; about Our Lady "the angel came and asked her consent," about ourselves "we are not perfect and it will take until we get beyond the grave before we are," about inspirations they "have a way of being wild—remember Hitler"; in a few lines we pass from mystery to practice, for instance from Our Lady Queen of Virgins to the "old Rosary in your trouser pocket." There seems to be nothing not touched on, and in the most practical way; but it is all grounded on hard thinking, nothing merely devotional about it. It is a new kind of Catholic book; the kind that is just needed. And it is laid out to be read in odd moments. The more odd moments the better. C.R.

**BE YE PERFECT.** By William Butterfield, D.D., Ph.D. (Burns Oates; 3s. 6d.)

It may be the war, it may be other things which are causing men to investigate the meaning and purpose of life. Whatever the cause people nowadays do desire more than usual to know how to live: here is a useful guide book suitable for all classes, both the guides and the guided. It is simple, clear and practical and claims to follow no particular "school" of ascetical or mystical thought, but outlines all the important ones with perhaps a slight stress on the Ignatian method. It is surprising that the names of Father Vincent McNabb and Father Bede Jarrett do not appear among the list of Dominican books of reference in the appendix. Two important points are worthy of note and commendation: emphasis on the need for a vocational ideal for all, and "It is a false spirituality which teaches that heaven is to be merited by a life of misery on earth." A thoroughly sound book which will prove a welcome introduction to those who wish to organise their life on earth with a view to heaven.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**RUSSIAN LETTERS OF DIRECTION.** By Macarius of Optino. Translated by Iulia de Beausobre. (The Dacre Press; 5s.)

We have here a number of short extracts from the letters of

spiritual direction, addressed to lay people, written between 1837 and 1860 by Father Macarius Ivanov, a hieromonk of Optino and a famous *starets* of that house. Iulia de Beausobre prefixes them with an account of the tradition of the *startsy* and of two of its greatest figures, Father Paissy Velichkovsky (d. 1794) and Father Macarius himself, and a delightful description of the Optino monastery.

It was recently remarked in *Blackfriars* that there is little in the spiritual writings of the Russian pilgrim translated by the Reverend R. M. French that should strike the Western reader as strange. This is even more noticeable in this book, and indeed a number of relevant passages from Western mystical writers have been added to illustrate it. Those writers are John-of-the-Cross, Catherine of Genoa and Catherine of Siena; but the resemblance could have been carried much further and more strikingly by reference to, e.g., Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul.

On the other hand, just occasionally the Western Christian is pulled up with a jerk. E.g., Macarius's reply to the sick correspondent who asked leave to eat ordinary food in Lent in accordance with medical orders. Here (pages 47-48), in a couple of short paragraphs, is a microcosm of those differences in "points of view," mentality, approach, that are a fundamental difficulty in the mutual understanding of Eastern Orthodox and Western Catholics.

But such considerations are of limited interest; this book was published primarily as spiritual reading: and on that head nothing more useful can be said than an urgent recommendation to read it. To the present reviewer it seems that Macarius, with a touch as firm as it is gentle, with wit and psychological insight, teaches quintessential Christianity at the level of the ordinary man and woman; that is, at a high level, but most simply and without frills, theological or other. One question is insistent: How much of this is due to the translator? Did Macarius write as effectively in Russian as Iulia de Beausobre does in English?

D.A.

A NEWMAN TREASURY. Chosen and edited by Charles F. Harold. (Longmans; 21s.)

In the winter of 1940-41 almost all the publisher's stock of Newman's printed works was destroyed. The present anthology, which comes from America, is designed to remedy that loss to some extent. In the course of some four hundred well-printed pages, prefaced by some useful notes on Newman's themes and style and present importance, we are given a balanced selection from his prose.

The first section of Essays and Discourses (such as *What is a*