Library Signpost

Views And Reviews

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann of St. Bernard's Seminary

The popularity of ordinary best-sellers in the book world is in a large measure due to fashion and extensive advertising. But, in the Catholic field, the matter is quite different. For one thing, I don't recognize such a thing as a Catholic fashion in books; and then again, the advertising of Catholic books is notoriously inadequate. Therefore, it seems to me that the popularity of certain Catholic books is due, not to such external factors as fashion and publicity, but rather to their intrinsic appeal and to the quiet word-of-mouth [illegible] one's friends.

Each month, the magazine America publishes a Book-Log reporting the returns sent by the Catholic Booksellers from all sections of the country on the ten Catholic books having the best sale during the past month. The report comes from forty-four firms, including our own Real Trant's. So as to keep Catholic Evidence Library patrons and readers of this column posted on current Catholic book developments, I shall give a report on this book-log each time it appears, thus spreading the good word and bringing others to the good feast of encouragement and inspiration which others are already enjoying.

1. Topping the latest list is "Tales from the Rectory," by Bishop Francis Clement Kelley. I don't know at present anything more about this "smallish" book than that it is a series of short stories, written in that very engaging style which belongs so specially to the genial Bishop of Oklahoma City. Past favorites among Bishop Kelley's books: "The Bishop Jots It Down," "Pack Rat," "Problem Island," "Letters to Jack."

2. Next in line is "The Robe" by Lloyd Douglas. The author is not a Catholic, but his novel which (if you don't yet know) centers around the seamless robe of Christ for which lots were cast on Calvary, is a reverent treatment of the subject, occupying itself not so much with Christ as with His influence on those who met Him; the book is notable for its lively reconstruction of the Roman-Jewish setting of Christ's time rather than for any important contribution to the literature on Christ, and while it says nothing to derogate from the doctrine of the Savior's divinity, still it says nothing, on the other hand, which is really commensurate with the Savior's clear and forthright claim, "Before Abraham was made, I AM."

3. "A Rose Unpetalled," by Blanche Morteveille, is proof that Catholics cannot hear enough about St. Therese of Lisieux; the book is a simple account of the great Carmelite's hidden life, done with distinction and conforming to the truer biographical standard of avoiding pietistic prettiness which makes holiness seem so unwholesome.

4. "The Song of Bernadette," by Franz Werfel, still seems not to have exhausted the interest of Catholic readers. I wonder how many will agree with me that it is a far more sublime and, therefore, significant, book than "The Robe."

5. "The Family That Overtook Christ," by M. Raymond, is a highly colored account, in story form, of the life of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and of his family. Though, in my opinion, it is poorly written, falling far short of the calibre of the Werfel and Douglas books, it is still valuable as giving to the general readers an attractive panorama of the life and times of one of the Church's greatest saints, who, as one of the historians has said, "bore the weight of the eleventh century upon his shoulders."

6. "With a Merry Heart" is a Treasury of Catholic Humor compiled and edited by Paul Phelan. Even if it does not satisfy the veteran Catholic reader who has his own favorite "runners-up" in the field of laughing wisdom, its rapid rise on the best-seller ladder is good news, for it means that hundreds of people are being introduced to what has been too long a closed book—the humor of holiness and of godly living.

7. "These Two Hands," by E. Edwards, S.V.D., is a novel of missionary's life in the East, written with a true sense of dramatic value and climactic power, and making the missions come to life.

8. "The Mass of Brother Michel," by Michael Kent, is a cleverly-contrived novel, written with a certain distinction, about a lay-brother who was given his life's ambition only right before he died: it brings the Mass home with graphic power.

9. "The Lords [illegible]," by Albert Paul Schimberg, does for St. Francis of Assisi what "A Rose Unpetalled" (No. 3 above) does for St. Therese: adds nothing new or profound to Franciscan literature, but re-tells the lovely story of God's poor troubadour in a simple and charming manner. Its popularity is only a sign that good people, like children, never tire of hearing a familiar and long-loved story again and again.

10. "Celestial Homespun," by Katherine Burton, is the life story of Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulists. It was reviewed in this column some months ago. It is bound to give many modern Catholics a better knowledge of early Catholic Americana, we must be [illegible] grateful. I find it a particularly fascinating study to discover the ways of Divine Grace under the waving of the Stars and Stripes.

All these books, except the first two, may be found at the Catholic Evidence Library, off the Columbus Civic Centre lobby, open every day except Saturday and Sunday, from 4 to 6, and from 7 to 9. The first two books will be added very shortly.

Five and Ten Years Ago

(From the Files of the CATHOLIC COURIER)

From Sept. 7, 1933, Edition

Dedication of the new bridge over the Seneca River on the Seneca Falls-Auburn Highway to the memory of Father Rene Menard, S.J., early Jesuit missionary to the Cayuga Indians, took place. The Rev. A. M. Thibbets of the North American Martyrs Shrine at Auriesville delivered the dedicatory address.

From Sept. 8, 1938, Edition

Death of His Eminence Patrick Joseph Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York, on Sept. 4, 1938, brought widespread sorrow. The eminent churchman was especially mourned in the Diocese of Rochester where he had been many times in his capacity as Metropolitan of the New York Province. His Excellency, Bishop Kearney delivered a sermon at the Children's Mass of Requiem, paying tribute to the distinguished Prelate.

Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, a non-Catholic, is readying a compromise-surrender plan for the Axis, based on Pope Pius' appeal to end violence and bloodshed.—Danton Walker.

PRESENCE OF GOD

For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils for Thou art with me.—Ps. 22, 4.

Movie Guide

NEW FILMS REVIEWED

Adventures of a Rookie, A-1
Outlaws of Stampede Pass, A-1
Tiger Fangs, A-1
Creo en Dios (I Believe in God) (Mexican), A-1
Guadalajara (Mexican), A-1
Here Comes Kelly, A-2
Johnny Come Lately, A-2
Larceny With Music, A-2
My Kingdom for a Cook, A-2
Tornado, A-2
All en el Tropico (Down in the Tropics) (Mexican), A-2
Scream in the Dark, B
Seventh Victim, The, B
City That Stopped Hitler, B

AT THE THEATRES

LOEW'S ROCHESTER

Best Foot Forward, A-2
Good Luck, Mr. Yates, A-1

CENTURY

Stormy Weather, A-2
No Escape (Not classified)

So Proudly We Hail, A-2
Nobody's Darling, A-1

TEMPLE

Queen of Broadway (Not classified)

LITTLE

Yankee Doodle Dandy, A-1

PALACE

The Sky's the Limit, A-1
Headin' for God's Country, A-1

The Samaritan's Gratitude

The supernatural is built on the natural. [illegible] when He [illegible]. He [illegible] virtues supernatural. So [illegible] healing of leprosy came to the Samaritan who returned to thank Christ, a gift prompted by his expression of gratitude, the supernatural gift of salvation. "Arise, go thy way; for thy faith hath saved thee."

Ten were made clean. One was a Samaritan, a man outside the orthodox faith of the Jews. The other nine were, we may presume, not Samaritans. [illegible] those who had received the [illegible] prayer to the chosen people. [illegible] God [illegible] [illegible] manifest to us [illegible] themselves to the priests. They saw His goodness as they were made clean on the way.

The gratitude of the Samaritan was in direct contrast to the ingratitude of the nine. Christ expected the rest [illegible] to give thanks for their healing: "Where are the nine?" This whole incident is included in the divine record of Christ's life to be a lesson to men of all time. We have a right to ask of God the blessings we need; we have His invitation to ask that we may receive. We have His promise that our prayers shall be heard. We know in our own lives how often our prayers have been answered, what blessings have come our way because we have prayed for them. Have we been as ready to send a prayer of gratitude after our answered prayers of petition?

Remember how [illegible] in God [illegible] gratitude. Keep in mind how the Samaritan received the greater supernatural gift of salvation because of his humble thanksgiving for the lesser gift of healing. God has been good to us, has answered our prayers; let us be sure to add to our prayers of adoration and petition, a daily prayer of sincere gratitude for what God has given us. Then too, we may expect Christ to say to us: "Thy faith hath saved thee."

Along The Way

New York, By the Way

By REV. DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

New York turns out at surprising times to be surprisingly Catholic. That is said in no sense of condescension, but merely of pleased surprise. For instance, beyond any city in the world—except Dublin—as far as my experience runs—it is the town where people speak to a priest on the street. The cops, [illegible] their shining faces and buttons, touch their peaks and grin. A pretty girl will swing along, look up in recognition of your Roman collar and her lips will move in a gracious "Good morning, father." More surprising, perhaps, an amazing number of Jewish people will smile at a priest and give him a greeting, if he shows any slightest sign of recognition. I like all that.

But when you walk around New York, you're bright if you watch for a lovely sort of open door. You think naturally of New York as a recreation center, an amusement headquarters, a spot where one out of three places turns out to serve food and drink. But if you'll watch for those open doors . . .

They are the cool lobbies of Catholic churches, dark, often, and quiet, and with a clear invitation to rest and peace. They are the open doors of convents, where you enter and walk through an unoccupied corridor into a chapel.

I suggest one of these, the convent of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary on 45th Street, just east of Third Avenue. The district is so near Grand Central and the theatrical squares that you'd not look for a chapel of perpetual adoration. Yet it is there, surrounded by some of the big printing buildings and newspapers and wholesale loft buildings. And once you cross that threshold and climb the single short flight of stairs, you're in a new world—no, that's wrong. You're in a delightfully old, eternal world. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed all day. Up in the front of the chapel a nun, all in white, is kneeling in adoration. The voices of children float up to you from the nursery and playground of the Sisters; and with Broadway very near and 42nd Street just a hop, skip and jump, you find the dearness of your Catholic faith and the living presence of your God.

Missing

The class had just been introduced to the Ten Commandments. They listened solemnly while the nun read them through in sequence.

There was a moment's pause, and a hand shot up.

"Is that all there are?" the boy demanded. "What about Remember Pearl Harbor?"

Signal Corps In Action

The main line of the railroad passes the Catholic school and as the troop trains whiz past, the little children all stop to watch the soldiers and to wave at them. And the nuns who shepherd them stand and watch too.

Recently a new custom has sprung up. As the soldiers pass, they fold their hands in a gesture of prayer, lift their eyes to heaven, as if they were begging the children's prayers. The youngsters, quick to catch signals, fold their hands in response, drop on their knees, and start praying even as they shake their heads in a vigorous Yes.

Nice way to send our boys off to war.

Poor Puppy Love

The letter came to me anonymously, so I can use it in the same way. But it is just another proof of the fatal fact that romance is in the air. Everyone is falling in love — romantically; and looking forward to falling in love — romance and marriage and love have become a preoccupation.

This letter is from a girl who met a boy, became friendly with him, found that when she was with him her heart began to beat wildly, got over him during the summer and with the autumn found that, on first sight of him, her heart started to flitter and thumbs once more. What should she do about it?

What she should do isn't really the interesting factor. The correspondent confesses that she is in Seventh Grade. But the romance bug has bitten her and bitten her hard.

Inclusive

Father Michael Kirwan, long superior of the Jesuit church in Gardiner Street, Dublin, had a most inclusive way of addressing audiences at his lectures.

"Reverend Fathers," he said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, and whoever else may be present."

With Open Eyes

Keep your eyes open, and it's surprising the number of pleasant things you see along the way. My correspondent finds two to tell me about in the course of a single letter: the deaf-mute Mother and Father who have the joy of giving their daughter to God in religious life . . . the woman beside her in the streetcar who, as she stood clinging with one hand to the strap, was [illegible] with the other hand the [illegible] of the rosary.

'Quiz' Corner

Why isn't the Holy Bible read [illegible] Catholic Church as in the other churches?

[illegible] the word of God [illegible] Catholic Church. It is read and taught about quite frequently at our Masses and in [illegible] [illegible] Perhaps you [illegible] the Bible is [illegible] of [illegible] and therefore [illegible] it should be [illegible] and quoted beyond all else. But the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] should be [illegible] and preached [illegible] [illegible].

Who were the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary? Where was she brought up, and where do we find it in the Bible?

There is no [illegible] in the Bible of the parents or place of residence of the Blessed Mother of God.

The common and generally accepted tradition is that the Blessed Virgin was the daughter of St. Joachim and St. Ann, and that she was born and reared at Nazareth.

Is it a sin for one to pay money to a fortune teller if one has the fortune told just for amusement and does not believe in it?

It is always a sin to support a sinful profession; therefore it is unlawful to have your fortune told by a professional teller even for amusement.

Must every soldier decide for himself whether a war is just or unjust?

Obviously such a decision would involve a complexity of distinctions far beyond the ordinary man. A soldier must fight, of course, for a just cause, but he can take the word of legitimate moral and public authorities for the justice of his cause. It is their business to know these things and they are bound in conscience to guide the rest of us. Unless it is clearly evident and beyond doubt that one fights in an unjust cause, he can follow the decisions of such lawful superiors with a good conscience.

In a Mass before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, why does the celebrating priest descend to the floor of the sanctuary to receive the water and the wine at the Offertory and not after the Communion?

He does not descend to the floor at the Offertory for water and wine but for the lavabo, that is, the washing of the hands. This is done out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament solemnly present. Washing of the hands is not usually done in the immediate presence of special friends and visitors in polite society.

Can a person now taking instructions for reception into the Catholic Church enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony, before receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation? A. R.

The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is not absolutely required before one can receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. Generally, the priest who is giving the instructions will suggest a place for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation as soon as possible after the instructions are completed. However, upon reception into the Church one can receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.

On some altars you see a statue or a painting of a lamb. What does that signify?

The lamb is an emblem of our Lord, the victim offered as a sacrifice for our sins. In the Old Testament the lamb prefigured the coming Messias. St. John the Baptist, pointing to the Savior, said: "Behold the Lamb of God."

Did Christ or the Church ever forbid any pope to take the name of Peter II?

Though no pope has assumed the title of Peter II, still neither Our Divine Savior, nor the Church, has made any prohibition in this matter. In my opinion the reason why there never has been a Peter II, may be due to this: that the successors of St. Peter wish that this name, divinely conferred, should stand [illegible] among all the rest.