

# philippine studies

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## **Rugged Reformer: Bold Encounter**

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as above that of the herds which have lived so long—in splendid ecological balance—upon the highlands of Africa, the disturbance may be looked upon as perhaps the most promising thing which has happened to the Balinese in many a dull and stupefying century.

It is within the special field of demography that Robbins' blunders are likely to be gross. He assumes naively—as so many seem to do—that it is possible to lower the rate of increase of population by aiming directly at reducing the birth rate. Refined demographic study has revealed the birth rate to be itself the effect of a complex set of deeply rooted social causes and that it is quite futile to aim at altering it by headlong measures of contraception. It will change in response to changes in the set of the subtle social influences which shape it.

Robbins also mistakenly ascribes to the Catholic Church opposition to the *idea* of birth control. The Catholic Church—the Mother of celibates—is no more opposed to the idea of birth control than it is to the idea of death. But it does exercise its duty of passing judgment upon the morality of the means by which either is brought about.

MICHAEL MCPHELIN

## RUGGED REFORMER

**BOLD ENCOUNTER.** A novel based on the life of Saint John of the Cross. By Father Peter-Thomas Rohrbach, O.C.D. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960. 224pp. \$3.75.

The subtitle tells us this book is a "novel", but the historical footnote assures us that the principal scenes represent factual history. Indeed, the life of this Carmelite mystic needs little fictitious addition to make it appealing to youth. John of Yepes joined the Carmelites at a time when these monks enjoyed certain relaxations of the Primitive Rule. It was not long before John's idealism and the tug of divine grace made him long for a more prayerful, a more rigorous life. St. Teresa of Avila convinced him to start among the monks, as she had among the Carmelite nuns, an order of Discalced Carmelites living the Primitive Rule of Carmel. The hardships that followed upon this foundation, the persecutions John suffered at the hands of his religious brethren, his imprisonment and scourging, his miraculous escape, the political intrigues that threatened to destroy the new foundation—these and many other scenes form a narrative that holds one's attention to the end. And Father Rohrbach weaves them into a powerful unity.

Those who have enjoyed Fr. M. Raymond's stories about his Cristercians (*THREE RELIGIOUS REBELS, THE FAMILY THAT OVERTOOK CHRIST, THE MAN WHO GOT EVEN WITH GOD*), will find in Fr. Rohrbach a kindred spirit. The style is the same: direct, imaginative, manly. Not as polished perhaps as Fr. Raymond's works, this book comes alive in every page—so alive, in fact, that the characters sometimes forget they are sixteenth-century Spanish monks, and act, instead, like twentieth-century Americans. All this, however, is on the credit side, considering the end for which the book seems written: to popularize the life of a Sain known more in his poems than in his person.

Almost no attempt is made to fathom John's mystic experiences or to understand his poetry. In fact these are mentioned only to be vigorously set aside. A regrettable lack, perhaps, but one in keeping with the purpose of the book. The author sets out to introduce the man rather than his works, and to present in vivid colors the selfless, almost reckless love which made him a saint—and in this he succeeds very well.

EDUARDO P. HONTIVEROS

## A PHILIPPINE TEXT

SCIENCE IN OUR SURROUNDINGS, Book I, with EXPERIMENT AND DEMONSTRATION MANUAL. By Fe San Juan. Baguio City: Catholic School Press, 1960. 334 and 110 pp. P6.00 and P1.50.

SCIENCE IN OUR SURROUNDINGS, published under the auspices of the Belgian Fathers, is a new addition to the growing list of general science textbooks for high school students. What makes the book particularly useful is that it has been especially prepared for Filipino students and, as such, has been adapted to suit the conditions existing in the country. In many cases, local conditions have been made the background of study. The titles of Units 12 and 13, *Science and the Filipino Home* and *Science and Our Natural Resources* and the chapter heading *Weather and Climate in the Philippines* are examples of local interest. This is one advantage it has over foreign textbooks and it may well enjoy the support and encouragement of our high schools.

The book's organization is fairly conventional. It is divided into units which, in turn, are divided into chapters. At the end of each chapter are several sets of review questions, and a list of suggested