

Blackfriars

who would have been so astonished to know that he provides the comic element in the Catherinian drama.

The translator has succeeded admirably, and makes us wish that she would give us a complete English rendering of Blessed Raymund's *Legenda*, the existing version being heavy and altogether unpalatable.

The book is excellently printed, and has for frontispiece the exquisite picture of St. Catherine by Borgognone in the National Gallery. It is probably not unlike her, for it seems based on the very interesting, though—and because—caricature-like portrait by Vanni.

S.M.B.

TEN POLISH FOLK TALES. Told by M. O'Reilly, from the French of Suzanne Strowska. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 3/6).

These stories are for children, so I have read them to children and taken their verdict—'jolly good.' Like most of the best foreign folk tales, these bear a relationship, sometimes a little obscure, but always interesting, to stories already familiar to us in our own language; but there is a strong sense of nationalism in them, and a wealth of local colour that makes them still more attractive, besides ten excellent black and white illustrations by Dorothy Mills; and there is, too, a sense of humour in the telling that is not lost on the children. But since, in this instance, they are written for boys and girls with an English up-bringing, it seems to me pointless to mention, for example, that a merchant 'went to sleep peacefully beside his spouse who was faithful to him,' when the facts have no effect on the story. One doesn't wish to be prudish, but surely there is plenty of time for children to read of the intimacies of marriage, carelessly touched upon, in the future?

R.R.

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN. By Virginia Woolf. (Hogarth Press; 5/-.)

One is not inclined to enter it. Feminism is so closely allied to the 'Social question,' a discussion of which bans the sense of humour, that we fear we should leave the room depressed and bored. But in fact this room is different; and one emerges from a brilliant experience, comparable to a Platonic dialogue. From all sides the arguments come; they circle round the object, shower darts upon it, are shielded off, reduced to ridicule. It is an intelligent book, not pedantry.

All *first class* works of thought, of art, of scholarship of any kind have been produced by human beings with leisure, independence, a room of their own. Without that, however great the genius, the work cannot be flawless. It will manifest distractions, lack integrity. The reproach that women until recent times, have not shone in the first rank of scholars, can be wholly met by pointing to the fact that for them such conditions have been lacking. This is Mrs. Woolf's thesis, and she illustrates it by a lucid historical sketch showing how women of genius in the past have realised their frustration; Lady Winchelsea spoiling her poetry with hatred, Dorothy Osborne confined to writing letters, Charlotte Brontë with half her genius unexpressed; even Jane Austen hiding her papers under her blotting pad. There is a very practical corollary—the essential basis of such leisure is sufficient cash.

It is a plea for the contemplative life—and that women should have a share in it. There are opponents. Thanks to admirable books like *All Quiet on the Western Front* we are beginning to dissociate the image of war from those of honour and glory. We still need to dissociate the image of woman from that of mental inferiority. It is a barbarous association; and it is comforting to know that so sturdy a Briton, the conservative and cant-hating Dr. Johnson, realised it. But there is another—Mrs. Woolf might be surprised to know—who, seven centuries ago, affirmed her central thesis. When Dominic Guzman, to the aggressive scandal of his contemporaries, abolished manual labour for his Order and substituted study he was pointing out that learning demands leisure and uninterrupted time. He even stressed the point, urging that all temporal matters should be in the hands of lay brethren. But his was an Order for men? Primarily, indeed, but was there not Prouille?

A.M.

SONS OF JACOB. By Mary Grace Ashton. (Murray; 7/6).

Those who have followed the development of Mary Grace Ashton will be delighted with her new book. It is written in the same graphic style as her two earlier books, with an even deeper understanding of the tangled threads of human motive and the intricacies of the free mechanism of the will. The story is a study of three Jewish young men, each of these brothers typical of one phase of Jewish life, the keen business man, the dreaming artist in music, and the irritable and irritatingly inefficient grumbler. But the story is not a study of their complete characters but rather of their characters as