

Blackfriars

The periodicals are more to the purpose than bound books, for they are the work of those who know what they are writing about through closer contact, whose chief object it is to find the funds for want of which missions are hampered. Books are appearing; and they are fortunate as a class that they may be bad in themselves and worse through conforming to the requirements of the trade, and still not damage seriously the entrancing subject. For it is the divine Lord's passion lived again by His lovers of both sexes and every age and condition.

The Golden Legend Overseas would be better without its literary ornaments. The original is by a galaxy of authors by whose names—among them Ghéon, Bellessort, Baumann, Schwob, Père Charles, Vallery-Radot—we are quite willing to be dazzled. All our attention however is required by the facts narrated when it is the story of the Uganda martyrs, the account of the first christians of Korea and many an heroic passion of prince or serving-maid. What martyrdom! Nothing else could furnish stories so moving. All the worse for some of the contents, distinguished by book-making affectation, 'real literary merit' as the introduction calls it. *Jacobus de Voragine* is a poor model for a martyrology.

It is trite to point out that translation must not be too strictly understood; it is more than substituting words of one language for those of another; that capitals need watching—'space' is every bit as good as 'Time.' Revision should go on as long as the press can wait; to save us from a thousand snares, from saying of a person we are trying to defend that 'we have no reason whatever to believe in his invincible ignorance.'

We recommend this book heartily.

J.G.

THE MEMOIRS OF PÈRE LABAT, 1693—1705. Translated and abridged by John Eaden. (London, Constable, 1931; 7/6 net.)

The editor of this book has had the happy thought of extracting from the eight volumes of Père Labat's West Indian Travels, first published in 1722 and several times reprinted, but never produced in English dress, the personal adventures of the great Dominican missionary, and has woven them into a coherent narrative. The result is an entrancing and quite exciting story of life at sea and on land, of pirates and buccaneers, French planters, Spanish settlers, English filibusters, negro slaves and untamed Caribs, fierce war and peaceful colonisation, ceaseless travel under primitive conditions, and the most zealous apostolic work—and all told and described by one of the most

Book Reviews

frank and witty, engaging and lovable, thoroughly *human* men who ever lived and wrote. The little volume is crowded with incident, and on the whole Père Labat is very satisfactorily translated. We could have wished, indeed, for a few elucidating notes, *e.g.*, it is not everyone who knows what a 'Jacobin friar' is, and it is a pity the book could not have been revised by someone with a knowledge of Catholic technical terms. Then we should have been spared such jarring phrases as 'holding Mass' and 'attending Communion,' the Dominican habit would not have been described as 'my full dress, clothes, both black and white,' a province of the Order would not have been confused with the Duchy of Provence, and Père Labat would not have been numbered among 'French Jesuits'!

F.R.B.

A CONVERSATION WITH A CAT AND OTHERS. By Hilaire Belloc. (Cassell; 7/6.)

It was no ordinary cat that leapt at one graceful bound into Mr. Belloc's lap as he sat in the bar of a railway station taking a glass of beer and meditating upon the necessary but tragic isolation of the human soul. A quadruped, so rare and bold, deserves its place of honour in the title of this book of Essays, themselves likewise both rare and bold. After the sixth page we part company with the cat and pass rapidly on to the other things and renew our acquaintance with those discourses, moralizings, dogmatizings, musings, reflections, contemplations, speculations, animadversions and discussions which gave us delight when we read them in the pages of one of the weekly reviews.

Mr. Belloc confesses that a certain *pudor* restrains within him the impulse that might otherwise stir him to autobiography: he has the desire, but he says (though it doesn't sound exactly like *pudor*), 'Why should I cast these pearls before my snouted fellow-citizens? Why should I open the Holy of Holies?' Yet the desire always gets the better of him and he is constantly straying into autobiography. Why not? Are these not conversations? And when a man is administering conversation, what else do you expect if not a good deal upon the one subject in which everyone is an expert? I do not mean that the autobiographical touches are of the kind that would help anyone to set about writing a Life of Hilaire Belloc; but then what autobiography ever helped towards the writing of a real Life? I mean that there is much that is more revealing than any set attempt to record the facts, no matter who made it.