

## BLACKFRIARS

### THEATRE

AFTER the surfeit of society plays, the wind seems definitely set towards the historical drama. *Richard of Bordeaux*, by Gordon Daviot, at the New Theatre, has had a merited triumph. Magnificently produced, its clear colours and clean lines are a joy to the eye, magnificently acted, it is an interesting example of the relative unimportance in a play of purely literary qualities as compared with action and character. The dialogue is trivial, often jarringly anachronistic, but the dramatic tension never flags; here is high tragedy. One is struck by the extreme similarity in the interpretation of Richard and his times with that in Gillian Olivier's *Broomscod Collar*—so much that one's first impression was that the young Catholic novelist was the author of the play also. But that I hear is not the case.

Another play of exceptional interest is *Francis Thompson*, produced at the suburban 'Q' Theatre, where its success has authorised its transfer to the West End. The author—so I am told by those best qualified to judge—has failed to present a Francis Thompson recognisable to those who knew him, but that, after all, was only to be expected. Those who know the poet only through his poems will at least find this presentation on the whole not at variance with their imaginings.

The theme is his brief friendship with Anne, that

' flower

Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring

And through the city streets blown withering . . . '

the poor little prostitute who could reverence what Alice Meynell called his 'angelic purity,' who fed him when he was a starving tramp, and who deliberately fled from his life for fear his new friends would misunderstand their relationship.

The author has not yet full mastery of his medium; there is a sameness in consecutive scenes, and the characterisation inclines to the conventional, but the play is none the less intensely moving. Emotion never becomes sentimentality, and an admirable reticence concedes three brief utterances to reveal the supernatural basis of the poet's striving. The result is a final impression of beauty, and, what is rarer still, of genuine spirituality.

B. B. C.

### LITURGY

AMERICA is not, perhaps, the country in which we should expect to find a flourishing Liturgical Movement. We regard it as the home of super-individualism. Generalisations on the subject are peculiarly misleading. And

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in actual fact there is a liturgical apostolate in America which rivals any in Europe and is far superior to the attempts yet made in England. It has its source in the great Benedictine abbey of St. John, Minnesota. The work of these monks is not confined to carrying out the liturgy with due solemnity; they have realised that the liturgy is the one and only source of the true Christian spirit not for clerics alone, but for the whole Christian people, and that it is urgent, terribly urgent, that the Christian people should return to it. So they have made their abbey the meeting place of Catholics from all over America and every year they hold a liturgical week during which they deal with various problems of the apostolate. They send forth also a vigorous and unceasing flow of literature from their press. They publish every month a little magazine *Orate Fratres* which we can recommend, after eight years experience of it, as one of the best and most stimulating of its kind in print. It does not pretend to be academic or archaeological, and we can be thankful for that: archaeology is the death of liturgy. It sets out to answer the question, how I can live the liturgy during each season in an intelligent and real way, and it does so admirably. We hope it will be much more widely read in England. Among the products of their press we may mention translations of Dom Bauduin's *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, Abbot Herwegen's *The Art Principle of the Liturgy* and Dom Haering's *Living with the Church*—all three valuable books for instruction and use. Another most illuminating publication is *The Mass-Drama*, by Fr. William Busch. This is a practical guide to the Mass as the 'Community Drama of the Christ-Life,' i.e. as an action in which all present take part *as actors*. It is a very helpful work and its importance will be realised by all those who, faithful to the Pope's insistent call, are determined that the Mass shall be once again the supreme *common* act of worship of Christ's Mystical Body. We all need to become 'Mass-conscious': this book will assist us.

A.M.

**CANTATE DOMINO.** A collection of supplementary hymns, compiled and edited by V.G.L. (Liverpool: Rushworth & Dreaper; Words and Melody, 1/6; Accompaniments, paper, 5/-; cloth, 7/-.)

Everyone who has to deal with the problem of congregational singing will long ago have realised how large is the gulf between our present hymns with their tonic-and-dominant tunes and measured swing, and those of the Liturgy with their austere modal melodies and free plainsong rhythm, and have wondered how the gulf was to be bridged. Here is the very book with