

## Book Reviews

existing. If the illustrator of sermons likes to go on, we hope and pray a magnificent, even sensational success for his very original work.

J.O'C.

ST. THERESA DE L'ENFANT JESUS (Definitive Biography). By Mgr. Laveille. Translated by the Rev. M. Fitzsimons, O.M.I. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne; 6/-.)

This book, which has been crowned by the French Academy, is a very fine contribution to the literature on St. Theresa of Liseux. It gives an account of her life, of her parentage, of the circumstances from which her parents were drawn, and of the chief events following her death up to the present time. The Saint's doctrine of Spiritual Childhood is well brought out, and the translation has managed to preserve the ease and richness of Mgr. Laveille's style.

The desire of the author has been to give a clear picture of St. Theresa in her own setting, and thereby to throw into relief all that is contained in her autobiography. Such an attempt, if successful, could not fail to make the autobiography itself even more popular and helpful.

Doubtless many have felt that an authoritative work of this kind was needed. An autobiography can only give one side of the picture. The other side must be supplied by those who came into immediate contact with the character concerned. The materials for such a work were found in the Saint's own writings; in the witness of the nuns of her Convent, and of friends who knew her before she entered the Carmel; and of the Apostolic Processes of Beatification and Canonisation and similar documents. The nuns of St. Theresa's Convent commissioned Mgr. Laveille to write this work, and gave him all assistance in their power, so that the picture might be made complete. No effort has been made to analyse critically the stages of the Saint's advance in spirituality, that being outside the writer's scheme.

The process of welding together the various materials available into one harmonious whole is completely successful. There is perhaps a sense of effort in the first one or two chapters; but from the dawn of St. Theresa's active consecration of herself to God the writer becomes completely at ease. The result is a most vivid and helpful picture of just the kind that we have been anxious to obtain.

The book is a mine of illustration, particularly of the virtues of community life, and it conforms to the highest

## *Blackfriars*

test of a work of this kind in that it makes the reader anxious to re-read the original writings of the Saint.

The difficult task of translation has been well carried out, and only one or two Gallicisms seem to have slipped into the text.

THE SUNNY WALL. By Cecily Hallack. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; 7/6.)

In reading this story one is carried through on an easy-flowing stream of events: there are no jolts or jars. It isn't exactly roses, roses all the way, but there is a soothing atmosphere—a pervading gaiety and quiet serenity even amid sad and disturbing happenings. The slender plot grows out of a chance meeting in a railway carriage. Those who share Miss Hallack's outlook will perhaps prefer to call it a *providential* meeting, and they will follow the delicate unfolding of the plot as they would the natural and supernatural sequence of events that are happening every day. We are introduced to a little circle of friends: we listen to their talk: we are cheered by their rosy optimism in face sometimes of tragic inducements to pessimism: we are inspired by their faith. Barring the next world, this is the best of all possible worlds. When the reader is on the point of being oppressed by the boisterous heartiness and aggressive cheerfulness of the young Franciscan, he can take refuge in the delightful spaniel, Chadband, or in Obediah, the swearing parrot. Moreover, there is a ghost or two to evoke other moods.

But it is not so much the story as the graceful telling of the story that we have found a prolonged joy. Miss Hallack extols 'the austere luxuries of the vagrant: the ancient freshness of stone and star, the tree-breathed air of a road beyond the towns, the vivid innocence of dew, the sounding silence in which a branch may creak and a bird cry.' The pedantic reader will notice *whom* for *who* on pages 194, 259, and 285; but the unsophisticated will read through with delight a very joyful book.

K.

IS THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION TRUE? By the Rev. O. R. Vassall-Phillips, C.S.S.R. With a preface by Father Ronald Knox. Pp. xii, 213. (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1929; 1/6.)

A veteran apostle of the faith gives us in this volume the first part of his *Catholic Christianity* (1916), that is to say, the part containing the Christian demonstration. The argu-