

BLACKFRIARS

WHISTLES OF SILVER AND OTHER STORIES. By Helen Parry Eden.
(The Bruce Publishing Company ; 2 dollars.)

Helen Parry Eden needs no introduction to readers of BLACKFRIARS and her stories and poems need no commendation. Those who made her acquaintance in these pages will be able to improve their knowledge and recapture their delight in this book of collected stories and poems wherein are gathered most of her more recent work. Her prose has a finished quality of excellence not commonly met with in modern writers. Whatever scrupulous care and exquisite taste may have gone to its making the result bears no mark of the fastidious or the finicky ; there are no irritating mannerisms and the story moves, as a story should, naturally spontaneously and with masterly ease like a cool, clear river. It is great writing which will outlive the work of others whom the fashion of the moment gives a temporary eminence. Her poetry has a glorious perfection. *Carol of a Hard Christmas* and *There Blew a Horn in Bethlehem* are up to the highest standard of English carols (and what a high standard that is !) : they are eminently singable. Who will match them with worthy tunes?

In the stories themselves wit, humour, pathos and devotion are blended in their natural and supernatural proportions. Impish fun is poked at ecclesiastics and theologians in the true spirit of absolute devotion to Theology and complete love of the Church. Baron Corvo's *Tales told to Toto* have been suggested as a companion volume; but Mrs. Eden's stories are better, wittier, minus the scurrility, have less sting in them, more humanity and humour and are easier and more delightful reading.

A Dialogue of Devotion is a marvellous example of the inspiration a poet can draw from the *Summa* of St. Thomas. The illustrations by Denis Eden are of a piece with the excellence of the book, which is *so* good that one is left wondering at its being published in America before England. Catholic publishers on this side of the Atlantic should have a more alert eye for a good thing.

B.D.

CINEMA

IT would seem that French film directors are men of admirable courage, for they are bold enough to make films about things that matter. Of the last two French films that I have seen, the first dealt with slavery and the second with children. The main advantage of dealing with the really important things is that one can afford to be serious, if not solemn about them ; whereas no one can be serious about infidelity without becoming morbid,

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All this protest against the cult of infidelity may sound like a plea for very virtuous maidens clasping hands with young men of high chivalric ideals and living happily ever after: but it certainly is not. Neither *La Maternelle* nor any other recent French film shown here has suffered from that particular defect. The placard outside the Academy, which shouts to the world that they are showing a 'grand drama of mother love,' may suggest that there is a feast of slush within, but those who go expecting another orgy after the stamp of 'Sonny Boy' will be disappointed. The people portrayed on the screen have the air of being people of ordinary human emotions, and not mere gyrating bundles of Freudian complex. Plainly the thing demanded very great skill on the part of the director; any excess and you would have had either a Gracie Fields burlesque or a modern version of 'Little Lord Fauntleroy.'

The film has all the technical excellence that is the usual foundation of the French films that we have seen here recently; there is a splendid grasp of relevant detail, the tilt of a hat or the droop of a cigarette, and all those things that go to the making up of atmosphere. Moreover the telling of the story is admirably done; particularly Marie's attempted suicide. The girl, distracted at the thought of losing *La Maternelle* as she had lost her own mother, stands on the quayside, gazing down into the water far beneath and seeing there the image of two lovers; the reflection changes and in that glassy mirror are shewn the girl's thoughts as they seethe in tumult through her brain; always to the refrain of her frustration by the love of man for woman: her own mother's elopement, the horror of the day when *La Maternelle* had kissed some brute of a man to save his family from the hiding that would otherwise have been their lot, and finally this last horror of *La Maternelle* willingly in the arms of her lover; and then the plunge. Baldly stated it sounds a mere technical dodge; but it is so admirably executed that at the time one does not think of the excellence of the technique; and that is the highest tribute that can be paid to a director on the purely technical side.

Practically all the acting is excellent; the mark of it is a great sincerity, from Madeleine Renaud's performance as *La Maternelle* down to the lovely study of the fat old charwoman. Rightly to appraise the acting of children is almost impossible; helped by the Director, the Marie of the film, with her craving for affection and her savage jealousy of anyone that threatens to deprive her of her one overwhelming desire, seemed to me as convincing as one could possibly expect; but the screen as well as the stage is faced with the problem of Juliet, though skilful direction can go a long way towards solving it,

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Incidentally, three compulsory visits to *La Maternelle* might with advantage be imposed on all English and American film directors; and all but the very addle-pated members of the general public will, if they have a chance, go there too.

H. BERRY.

NOTICES

ON THE POWER OF GOD. *Quæstiones Disputatæ de Potentia Dei.* By St. Thomas Aquinas. Literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers. Vol. I (Questions I—III). With an Introduction by Thomas Gilby, O.P. Pp. xii, 248. Vol. II (Questions IV—VI). Pp. 227. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 7/6 each vol.)

The *Quæstiones Disputatæ* are a kind of Hansard Report of the debates held by St. Thomas as part of his course of lectures. He dealt with the subject matter of these volumes during his time in Italy as official theologian to the Papal Court. They start with discussions regarding the power of God in general, and go on to His begetting and creative power (Vol. I); the creation of matter, the power whereby the universe is sustained in being, and miracles (Vol. II). We hope that these volumes will have the welcome accorded to the English translation of the *Summa Theologica* and the *Contra Gentes*. English students of philosophy and theology are under a great debt of gratitude to Fr. Lawrence Shapcote, O.P., to whom belongs the chief praise for the whole of this great work of translation.

F.v.S.

DIE GESCHICHTE DER KATHOLISCHEN THEOLOGIE SEIT DEM AUSGANG DER VATERZEIT von Dr. Martin Grabmann. (Freiburg i.B. : Herder. R.M. 12.50.)

A general survey of the history of Theology has long been needed, and the task could not have been committed to more competent hands than those of Mgr. Grabmann. Although his history begins with the close of the patristic period, an excellent introduction sums up the work of the Fathers in laying the foundation for subsequent theologians. In the 120 pages on the Theology of the Middle Ages an account is given of the work of every mediaeval theologian, mystical writer and canonist of the least importance as well as a summary of that of the Byzantine divines. Here the author is on his own familiar ground and at his very best so far as the compass and purpose of a manual permits. Another 130 pages brings the story rather breathlessly down to our own day. The lavishness with which the author lavishes unfortunately laudatory adjectives on all and