

Catholicism in the free world. This is a book for all who wish to understand the history of our times.

UVEDALE TRISTRAM

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE OLD LOW COUNTRIES. By Stephanus Axters, O.P. Translated by Donald Attwater. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s. 6d.)

As the Preface tells us, this book is made up of a series of Conferences originally delivered at Le Saulchoir, and previously published in French. The Conferences sketch in outline the spirituality of the old Low Countries from the earliest Christian ages to the seventeenth century. Inevitably and rightly the central figure is Ruysbroeck, and it is his teaching on contemplation which is made the touchstone for the authentic spirituality of the old Low Countries. Great as the influence of Ruysbroeck undoubtedly was, such a procedure is open to objection, for although what may be called the practical school of the *devotio moderna* may have been indebted to Ruysbroeck in so far as it dealt with mysticism at all, this, as the author admits, was not very far, and the temper of the two schools was essentially different. The attempt to defend a thesis, in fact, somewhat detracts from the usefulness of the book. A representative list of the spiritual writers of the region is considered, though necessarily in a somewhat cursory manner, and it would have been more satisfactory to have considered them objectively, stressing what was characteristic and valuable in their teaching, rather than examining the often abstruse points for which they seem to be indebted to Ruysbroeck. When all is said and done 'the old Low Countries' remains a geographical division, but it serves as well as any other to delineate a group of writers to discuss.

The translation reads easily, but it is a pity, though no doubt not the fault of the translator, that there is a considerable amount of what can only be called theological jargon, due perhaps to the fact that the Conferences were originally delivered to an audience of theologians.

The book provides a useful guide to a body of writers many of whom are little known, but its value would have been considerably enhanced by an index.

GERARD SITWELL, O.S.B.

NOTICES

SONNETS AND VERSE, by H. Belloc (Duckworth; 12s. 6d.), appears in a new edition, with additional poems and an introduction by Reginald Jebb. Mr Jebb reminds us that in his latter years Belloc often said he would wish to be remembered by his verse, and *Sonnets and Verse* provides a noble memorial.