

Book Reviews

LE BIENHEUREUX DON BOSCO. Par A. Auffray. (Emmanuel Vitte, Paris ; 20 frs.)

This life of Blessed Don Bosco is an improvement on other biographies because it not only describes Don Bosco's amazing activity, his gifts of prophecy, miracles, bilocation and discernment of spirits, but it brings us into contact with the soul of a great man and a saint. It shows us how a life may be sanctified by work, and even by overwork, for from that memorable 8th of December, 1841, when Don Bosco rescued his first poor boy from an irate sacristan, his time was no longer his own : every instant of it was devoted to his boys.

Heureusement pour les pauvres qu'il y a des pauvres. Don Bosco was born in poverty and experienced all its hardships ; but his home was a happy one, thanks to his wise and saintly mother. To her René Bazin's words may be fitly applied : *Il y a des mères qui ont une âme de prêtre.* And Père Auffray reminds us that when we marvel at the splendour of this good man, the greatness of his undertakings, his passion for God and for souls, his calm intrepid faith, we should give a thought to that humble peasant woman, his mother, poor and unlettered, yet rich and noble in soul, who for fifteen years, with patience and courage amid poverty and difficulty, fashioned the heart of this priest (p. 80).

Don Bosco's manner of dealing with his boys is well worth the attention of modern psychologists. He had unusual intuition and a deep knowledge of human nature ; but above all he trusted his boys and loved them with true supernatural charity. And they loved him and trusted him in return. His illness in 1846, which the doctors declared would be fatal, threw his boys into passionate grief. Père Auffray describes how these generous-hearted youths organised a magnificent assault of prayer, battering, as it were the very gates of heaven to win back their father from death. They made wild vows, fasted on bread and water and did every kind of holy folly that love can move warm-hearted youths to attempt (p. 109).

Se faire aimer soi-même pour mieux faire aimer le Bon Dieu was Don Bosco's motto. He insisted that recreation should be real relaxation : he played games with the boys, encouraged gymnastics, romping and laughter. When people complained of the noise, he said that so long as his boys kept from sin, nothing else mattered. On the religious side he prescribed for his boys short sermons and liberty in their devotions ; he would have no fixed days for general communions.

Blackfriars

Charity, confidence, joy; to these he trusted to form the characters of his boys. He would have them joyous at prayer, joyous in poverty, joyous in contradictions and sufferings, and he himself set the example in a simple matter-of-fact fashion.

Don Bosco avait l'âme la plus gaie du monde: and we put down this story of his life, which may be called one of God's fairy tales, with an indefinable impression of joy. S.M.T.

NUMBER SEVEN JOY STREET. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford; 6/-.)

Here is *Number Seven Joy Street*, with a most attractive wrapper as usual. It is dedicated to 'Parents, Aunts, Uncles, Elder Brothers and Sisters, Friends, and All who buy this volume for children and read it themselves.' But for whom is it intended really? It declares itself 'A Medley of Prose and Verse for Boys and Girls.' But is it for them? I am not so sure. At any rate the list of contributors is as good as usual, and that is high commendation. Those line drawings in the beginning by Irene Mountfort are exquisite. The first story, 'Princess Dimple,' has the real Joy Street flavour that we expect from Mabel Marlowe and the drawings are almost alive. That is for the children undoubtedly. Marian Allen takes us to the Zoo and I like her drawings even better than her verses (though I suspect she is not unacquainted with 'Christopher Robin'). 'By Underground' is a pleasing phantasy in which tube railways and fairyland are most gorgeously mixed; only Algernon Blackwood uses rather big words and grown-up sentences for children. I suspect he has one eye on the Parents, Aunts, and the rest of them. I feel the more sore about this because in 'Westwoods' Eleanor Farjeon seems to have a profound underlying moral. Of course stories for children often are a cloak for something more serious or more subtle, like 'Alice Through the Looking Glass,' but Miss Farjeon seems more intent on pointing the moral than adorning the tale. Perhaps I am still biased by that dedication, and anyhow it is so easy to pass on to Ethel Cooke's verses, if only because there are some more of those very attractive pictures by I.M. (The pictures by themselves would make Number Seven worth while. All the coloured plates are good.) But, bias or no bias, of this I am certain, that 'Cotton Woolleena' was *not* written for children, even if Laurence Housman is the author. The language and the ideas are much too 'grown-up,' and yet I do not see that there is much to attract the 'Parents, Aunts, and the rest of them,' either. It is a pity because it is the longest story in the book. The next is a long one too, a cat story by Roy