

## REVIEWS

reinforcing the teaching of the Liturgy!" (p. 6). "(We wonder if the average parish in the Middle Ages singing plainchant) fell into the lady-like, namby-pamby, pernickety imitations of French monastic chanting—a thing beautiful in itself, in its proper setting—that are often heard to-day" (p. 8). The instruction given in the following Chapters is marked by the same sound common sense, and the rhythmic markings of Solesmes are followed as a means, not as an end, in the interpretation of the Vatican Editions. There is a refreshing insistence on the function of the Chant in illuminating the meaning of the text so often one hears a lovely passage rendered meaningless by an exclusive concentration on the Chant. The examples worked out here could not have been better chosen or more fittingly analyzed.

Those who use this indispensable book will learn to sing the Chant with a living voice, unafraid to express that temperate degree of personal sensibility which all enduring song demands. We have suffered too much already from scientific Robots in this respect. May this original and most stimulating introduction quite soon be followed by the bigger work which the author promises us. He is one of the few writers on this vital subject who regards the chant as something more than an archaic branch of musical science subjected to the arid touch of the technical expert. He manifests it to us for what it is, the song-prayer of the Living Church.

AELWIN TINDAL-ATKINSON, O.P.

### CATHOLIC BIOGRAPHY

IRISH SAINTS IN ITALY. By Fra Tommasini, O.F.M., translated with additional notes by J. F. Scanlan. (Sands; 15/-.)

CATHERINE TEKAKWITHA. By Daniel Sargent. (Longmans; 7/6.)

BLESSED AGNELLUS AND THE ENGLISH GREY FRIARS. By Father Gilbert, O.S.F.C. (Burns Oates; 5/-.)

MOTHER MARGARET MOSTYN. By Sister Anne Hardman, with a Preface by Archbishop Mostyn of Cardiff. (Burns Oates; 5/-.)

*Irish Saints in Italy* is a work of considerable historic value, for half the book is devoted to what amounts to a history of Irish Catholicism at home and abroad. It seems at times that the author is unnecessarily on the defensive in dealing with so glorious a page in history as the influence of Irish Saints on European Christianity. Dempster is long dead, and Gildas still more so. Surely no serious historian of to-day would attempt to rob Ireland of her great glory. If the introductory section is long—it extends over 230 pages—it is as we have said of the greatest value, and the remainder of the work, the individual lives of the seventeen

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Saints chosen, is most scholarly. The volume as a whole is, however, more suited to the shelves of a student of historical research than to the library of a general reader.

*Catherine Tekakwitha* is an historical biography of equal merit, and here again a large portion of the book is devoted to an historical introduction, necessary to the understanding of Catherine's life. In fact we do not meet Catherine until page 157, when only ninety pages remain of the whole work. The story of the Algonquins and Iroquois, of which races were her Christian mother and pagan father, is clearly and interestingly told, and very clear is the religious explanation of the barbarous cruelties practised by these Indian nations. Catherine was born in 1656, in the village of Ossernenon, which had been the scene ten years before of the martyrdom of Saint Isaac Jogues. "The Lily of the Mohawks," as Catherine has been called, was thus a most beautiful flower sprung from the soil watered by his blood. Her father was a *sachem*, or chief, her mother a captive from an Algonquin village and a Christian. Both parents died when she was but four years old, and Catherine was not baptized until her eighteenth year. But all through her girlhood she preserved herself from the depravity of a tribe now decadent through the introduction of "fire-water" by the Dutch. After her baptism she withdrew to another village, that of Caughnawaga near the St. Lawrence river, and here she spent the remaining six years of her life in uninterrupted penance and prayer. Her penances were of the most frightful nature, and reflect the hardness and contempt of suffering inherent in her blood, a heritage of the fierce Iroquois. Her saintly death took place on April 17th, 1680. In 1884 the Plenary Council of Baltimore petitioned for her Beatification which, however, has not yet taken place, and in 1890 a great monument was erected to her memory in the place where she died.

In 1898 Pope Leo XIII set the seal of the Church on the veneration of many centuries paid to Agnellus of Pisa, founder of the English Franciscans, by allowing his feast as a *Beatus* to be kept throughout the Franciscan Order, and in the dioceses of Pisa (his birthplace) and Birmingham (wherein lies Oxford, the scene of his labours). Father Gilbert relates in this little book the beginnings of Franciscan life in England, and has succeeded in drawing an excellent historical portrait.

Sister Anne Hardman, S.N.D., who has already placed us in her debt by her excellent history of English Carmel in *Penal Times* (reviewed in *BLACKFRIARS*, December, 1936), continues her work on Carmelite history by giving a graphic account of the life of that extraordinarily saintly soul, Mother Margaret Mostyn, Prioress of the Carmelites at Lierre who died in 1679. Her life

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seemed to consist of almost uninterrupted marvels, and in the first twenty-five pages Sister Anne Hardman gives references to no less than twenty apparitions of Our Lord, His Holy Mother, and the Saints. And these wonders continue in great number throughout the book, gathered from the original biography written by the nuns' chaplain, Canon Edmund Bedingfield, in the year following Margaret's death.

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

MARK SYMONS. By Stephanie Wines. (Sheed & Ward; 5/-.)

"He knew how to live life fully, but he did not mind when he knew he had to die. He would like, he said, to paint some more pictures, and he hated to leave his wife alone, but apart from that he was perfectly content." These words show had necessary it was that this book should be written. It is to be hoped that it will reach all those who had heard his name and knew him only as a sensation-monger, as a painter of problem pictures. For that has been his fate since the Academy made him newspaper "copy."

And indeed, it is not only in justice to him that it should be read. It throws light on something that was obscure in his pictures. One always felt that there was something that they lacked, and now it is clear that they lack complete co-ordination with the artist. They fail to "represent" him. He might have been a saint, or he might have been the mountebank that Fleet Street, with its customary charity, led the world to believe. And it is clear too, that this circumstance is the outcome of the false restraints that were imposed on his artistic development. One has only to glance at his pictures to get an idea of the vigour with which he treated all the material that came to his hand, but at times it is very much like the vigour of a circus performance, of a clown going through a paper hoop. And in course of his development he had too many paper hoops. His pre-occupation with detail as such, his repertoire of "styles," etc., were all so unnecessary and useless. His art owed too much to them and too little to himself. Hence the sense of fiction. This book does something towards dispelling the fiction. There is a sense in which what is bad can be explained away. With this knowledge of the man, we, quite rightly, come to regard the imperfections of his pictures as of less significance.

Throughout the book it is his character that is the predominant interest, and the authoress presents it in the best way possible. She states facts. She tells of his everlasting talk, of his zeal and integrity, and above all makes it clear he "escaped from the conventions in the manner of the artist, but also in the deeper manner of the saint." Perhaps it is a sign that it has been well done when the reader is left wondering how to arrive at an estimate of this