

## *Blackfriars*

PRAYERS FROM THE EASTERN LITURGIES. Compiled by Donald Attwater. Preface by Abbot Cabrol, O.S.B. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 4/-.)

It is difficult to describe the beauties of this little book in anything less than superlatives. It is a collection, small and carefully selected, of the most beautiful prayers in many of the Eastern Liturgies, set forth in good translations. Rarely does one feel that a translation is being used, one can simply *pray* without distraction. These prayers breathe the true spirit of the Liturgy, and, though their Liturgy has a different flavour from that of our own Western rites, yet the same breadth of thought and feeling underlies each, both are equally far removed from the flowery piety of too many modern devotions. One is immediately struck by the doctrine contained in these prayers, they breathe that full air of 'classical Catholicism' of which a well-known author has lately written. A few striking features may be mentioned; a beautiful prayer to the Altar after the offering of the Holy Sacrifice (p. 31); an almost perfect prayer with which to begin Mental Prayer (p. 53); a new title for Our Lady—'Mother of Light' (p. 27)—mother of the Light of the World, may not this one day find its way into the Litany of Loreto?

F.M.

THE FRANCISCAN ADVENTURE: A Study in the First Hundred Years of the Order of St. Francis of Assisi. By Vida Dutton Scudder. (Dent; 15/-.)

Here is a big book containing well over four hundred pages, with an excellent index and a valuable bibliography. It is evidently the fruit of much reading and study, and one would like to call it a fine book, for it contains much excellent matter, gathers within easy compass a vast amount of information not otherwise easily accessible, and is consistently well written. Wise treatment and sober judgment mark Miss Scudder's handling of many difficult questions and enigmatic personages. 'Things would have moved much the same way had he never existed,' is her comment on Brother Elias; and nothing could be truer. Her pages on John of Parma, her Notes on Franciscan Literature, her chapter on *The Sacrum Commercium*, and many other sections of the book are good. However, as a whole, the book is vitiated throughout by a false perspective, a warped sense of proportion. It purports to be a study of the first hundred years of Franciscan history, yet the main bulk of the work is concerned with disputes—vastly overcoloured, for Miss Scudder follows, unquestioning, Sabatier's well-worn tracks

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—which occupied some of the friars in Italy and for a while in the South of France, and meanwhile has hardly a word to say—despite by way of a sop a chapter on The Franciscan Achievement—on the vast missionary work embarked upon by the Order. It is as though one were to write a history of a hundred years, say 1831-1931, from parliamentary records alone. What a sorry picture that would give of English life and work: and yet that is precisely what we have, as far as the Franciscan Order is concerned, in this imposing volume. When will historians come to realise that the disputes in the Order in the first century of its life, which gave birth to so much contentious and tendencious literature—happy hunting ground for the modern student—were far less ‘actual’ to all but the disputants themselves than they have since been made to appear? How little they all meant to the Franciscans in England and Germany, China and Persia. Yet Miss Scudder’s book would lead the unwary to imagine that the *whole* Order was in perpetual turmoil till *The Rout of the Zealots*, as she melodramatically calls it, in the opening of the thirteenth century, and the subsidence of the Order, as she figures it, into a conventional and colourless body. No—as St. Bonaventure and Celano would tell Miss Scudder if she could read unbiassed those golden sources—the love of Christ and the love of souls form the real key to Francis and his Order. Ignore this, and the life of Francis and the achievement of his great foundation will never be read aright: we shall have, as in this instance and many others, a distorted picture. There is a concluding chapter in Miss Scudder’s book called *The Franciscan Promise*. If Miss Scudder had been in a position to add Pope Pius XI’s Encyclical on *The Social Order* to her bibliographical list, that chapter would never have been written. It is much to be regretted that it ever was.

O.F.M.

IRISH NUNS IN PENAL DAYS. By Mrs. Thomas Concannon, M.A., D.Litt. (Sands & Co.; 2/6 net.)

The author describes her book as ‘an attempt to tell, in broad outline, the story of the four ancient Orders: Poor Clares, Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians, who in Penal Day Ireland kept the light of their hidden conventual life burning, . . . and the still more wonderful story of the foundation by Nano Nagle of the great Irish teaching Order of the Presentation Nuns . . .’ The record of the sufferings and achievements of these heroic women, so deserving of memory, bespeaks long