

in cold print, as is so often the case with words whose life and sparkle come from the spirit and personality of the man who makes them. The book cannot be recommended for all and sundry, since it is not attuned to the modern taste, but as a memorial to a great man of God it should find a place in many Irish homes, lay and religious, where the memory of Father Browne (he died in 1933) is still cherished.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE PRIEST. By Fr Eugene Boylan, O.C.R. (Mercier Press; 10s.6d.)

This book is described in the blurb as 'a spiritual classic for priests' but it is not that—its defects are too numerous. First of all, it is not a book but a series of monthly articles bound together in their original form, and consequently there is much needless repetition both of phrase and thought and an irritating repetition of such remarks as 'space does not permit more to be said here'. Then there are some 'notable omissions' which though admitted by the author are not thereby justified. For example, there is 'no attempt to examine a priest's obligation to seek perfection', which the author admits is a fundamental and which is, of course, the only justification of all that follows. To include it would have meant recasting the whole book, and although there is a promise that these omissions will be made good later, the promise does not justify this book. There is, too, a wide gap between abstract idealism and practical counsels. Time and again the author leaves us in no doubt that his ideals are second to none, 'These views may seem extreme. And so they are. But the priesthood is an extreme thing. . . . Those are extreme words, terribly extreme . . . and if we are to put such extreme words into practice no superficial fulfilment is sufficient': but the practical counsels are by no means of so high an order. Internal evidence shows that the author is not entirely happy about this: see, for example, his half-apology that he 'would not care to undertake the responsibility of opposing views' more extreme than his own. One gets the impression, so often given in Clergy Retreats etc., that religious feel constrained to mitigate their idealism to suit what they consider the most they can ask of seculars. They seem to have decided that secular standards are low and they want to make them higher but dare not suggest that they should be as high as they know they ought to be. Their policy (and it seems almost a conspiracy) tends to confirm the unfortunate secular in acquiescing in something less than the highest practical idealism. It is noticeable throughout this book that the author is ill-at-ease and diffident when writing practical suggestions to the clergy (these passages are in glaring contrast with the authoritative and magisterial way in which he writes of the inner life) and he seems to realise his own limitations for he gives lengthy quotations from secular (and therefore in the circumstances unimpeachable?) authors rather than his own opinions. The doubt is inevitably raised whether,

if these authorities had not been available, he would have dared to place his standards even as high as he has. Having listened to many conversations after Clergy Retreats and Days of Recollection, I can assure the author and others who are easy on seculars that seculars are not grateful. The greatest obligation to sanctity comes from the priesthood which we share in common, not from the religious state. When writing on the inner life, and the means of attaining it, Father Boylan needs no authorities: he is himself an authority.

In his remarks on studies and the rosary, there is a curious inconsistency. Arguing from Canon 129 he maintains that because the Code enjoins it, study for a priest is the will of God and therefore 'no matter what opportunities of doing good a priest may pass over' in order to study, by studying he is doing something 'much more . . . holy and apostolic'. Apparently, however, the same argument does not hold in regard to the rosary, for although he refers to Canon 125 he makes no attempt to argue that therefore to say the rosary every day is the will of God also. He binds the priest to no more than 15 decades a week, a decade each morning and evening, more or less, and even that 'one should not be afraid to say walking or moving about'. Had the author been writing before 1916 he would not have bound the priest to any recitation of the rosary whatsoever, if he preferred the Little Office. This would have been surprising in view of the many papal encyclicals on the importance of the rosary. There is something too subjective here.

The book would be greatly improved if the chapters giving practical counsel were omitted and other chapters giving the fundamental obligations of the priestly state and the ways of achieving them were included and the ends tidied up by discarding the magazine-technique.

In spite of its defects, this book has much to commend it, particularly the chapters on the inner life and the references to works where points raised could be studied more fully.

The better is often quoted as the enemy of the good: here is a case where the good is the enemy of the better.

TERENCE TANNER.

**SAINTE BENEDECT: HIS LIFE AND WORK.** By T. F. Lindsay. (Burns Oates; 10s.6d.)

When this book came to me for review I had to choose whether to read it as another life of St Benedict and critically to compare it with its predecessors, or to let it introduce me for the first time, as it were, to the founder of Western monasticism. Since the publishers assure us that it is 'admirably suited to the general reader, whether Catholic or non-Catholic', I chose the latter alternative, and it is therefore as a general reader that I attempt to discuss it here.