

but also to provide a short account of their historical development. There are some helpful diagrams, and several excellent photographs illustrating the text.

Even those whose knowledge of sewing is comparatively slight should feel encouraged by this book to attempt to make something for their church, whilst those who wish to go more deeply into the subject will find a considerable bibliography appended, though it is unfortunate that so many of the books listed are out of print.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

GOSPEL MEDITATIONS. By Alfred O'Rahilly. (Browne and Nolan; 18s.)

This book is only worth reviewing here because of its foreword. This is quoted extensively on the dust-jacket, and in such a place it could well be a snare, as it is certainly a delusion, though by no less a person than Father Martin D'Arcy. The great scholarship of the author is emphasized, the high quality of his studies in this field are pointed out, he is compared to Lagrange and Guardini. His historical and exegetical scholarship, we are told, makes the Gospel text speak to us. These qualities I would not deny to Professor O'Rahilly, but they do not appear in this book. In the author's own words from the preface, 'This unpretentious volume has no claim to scholarship'. It is the foreword that is pretentious. The hundred incidents dealt with are treated gently and simply. Thoughts for meditation are not forced upon the reader, but are offered him for his attention. These stories from the Gospels are put in a popular idiom; they are just saved from vulgarity by the author's good taste. It is very doubtful whether the way of offering historical background has any value at all. Will it be of any help whatever to the reader for whom this book is intended to be told that Anna (called 'a devout old lady'), had lived through such events as the death of Alexander Jannaeus, of Queen Alexandra, the advent of Herod, etc.? Do not the simple words of the Gospel itself give a far stronger impression of what she must have been? The 'scholarship' shoved in in this way seems very much a case of blinding with science. In places points are brought out very clearly, in others they are forced out rather falsely. It is not at all a bad book, but it is also not at all what Fr D'Arcy would lead us to believe. G.R.H.



NOTICES

A GREAT many books and pamphlets have appeared this year to celebrate the centenary of Lourdes. We list some of them here with comments on their usefulness to our readers.

Queen of the Universe (Grail Publications, St Meinrad, Indiana; \$4.00) is the second volume of the Marian Library series of anthologies. It is concerned with the Assumption and Queenship of Mary and includes Papal pronouncements, theological research and popular treatment. Most of the material is well chosen considering the vast amount of literature to be drawn upon.

This Place Called Lourdes, by Sister Maureen Flynn, O.P. (Burns Oates; 15s.), is a devout but reasonably sober account of the place, the miracles, the pilgrimages and the religious atmosphere of Lourdes. The section on the Miracles is much the largest and is written with considerable technical knowledge. There is a short chapter on 'The Uncured' which puts the miracles in their right perspective. Certainly a useful book, and one which might well be read in preparation for a first visit to Lourdes.

A smaller work of the same character in pamphlet form is *The Spirit of Lourdes*, by Rev. J. A. Shields, M.A., D.C.L. (M. H. Gill and Son, Dublin; 3s. 6d.) The author has also written a guide to Lourdes. Here he outlines its story and dwells on its spiritual significance. *The Rose of Lourdes* (M. H. Gill and Son, Dublin; 4s.) is the story of Lourdes in ballad form. 'It is in verse, but not verse of the kind that repels the average reader', says the blurb. If you consider yourself an average reader you may be prepared to take the risk and you may find it congenial; on the other hand you may think, as we do, that what might have been made a simple and attractive ballad has been ruined by its archness and conventional Victorian ballad language.

Messrs Burns and Oates are publishing a series of *Universe Books* in shiny paper-back form at 2s. 6d.; they are, I think, all reprints of already well known works and are well produced and very good value. Among them are the following: *Bernadette of Lourdes*, first published in 1941 under the title *The Sublime Shepherdess*, by Frances Parkinson Keyes. This is another book about Lourdes which will be welcome to many. Other titles in this series which recommend themselves are: *The Gospels* and *The Letters of St Paul*, translated with Introductions by Ronald Knox. Thomas Merton's well-known *Seeds of Contemplation* and *Saints and Ourselves*, edited by Fr Philip Caraman, S.J. I mention only one out of the thirteen biographies of Saints in this collection, that of Maria Goretti, by Dr E. B. Strauss. Many of us are repelled by the very idea of this apparently rather precocious child-saint. If you feel like that you ought to spend half-a-crown and buy this book, if only to read Dr Strauss' essay and revise your view. You will, however, find the other essays also worth while.