

BLESSED ALIX LE CLERC. By Margaret St L. West. (Douglas Organ; 2s. 6d.)

A new *beata* might easily be lost in the crowd, and since Alix le Clerc is important in twentieth century Europe a brief biography published at the time of her beatification is particularly welcome. Over three hundred years ago—she died in 1622—she was campaigning, and campaigning is the word, in the cause of women. She was neither a Joan of Arc nor an Elizabeth Fry. She was a teacher. And she was also a saint, so her work still lives. For this twofold reason she is particularly important today. Her Order was an innovation in 1600, for the work of teaching was not an appendage or an afterthought, but an essential part of the life. 'Education was not to be an accessory for its members, since it was in order to become excellent educators that they wished for the religious life and rules of enclosure.' So with Peter Fourier she worked to evolve a way of life in which prayer and work were integrated. The education of women was not conceived as an attempt either to restore the dignity of woman or to give her equality with man. The phrase, 'blue-stocking', had no literary connotation till a hundred and fifty years later and was only applied to women fifty years later still. Alix le Clerc and Peter Fourier just wished to give women their natural rights and there was no question of education drawing the women away from their homes. On the contrary, mothers must be themselves educated if they are to train their children. 'Uneducated women do more harm than uneducated men, because of the all-important part played by the mother in the upbringing of her children.'

For these reasons among others Alix Le Clerc commands our attention today and Miss West has done a service in bringing her before us in a workmanlike fashion. We are told the plain facts of her life in clear perspective; the background against which she worked, her own origins, the influence of Peter Fourier and above all her aims and ideals. Perhaps it is only to be expected that we should find ourselves still curious at the end of the book. That is because so many subjects have, of necessity, been mentioned only to be dismissed. Two of these merit special consideration: the importance of 'work'—teaching or whatever it might be—together with the divine office in the life of religious of the twentieth century; and 'higher' education for Catholic women. A book could be written on each of these subjects.

Here and there the character of the French sources creeps through into the English style, and the account of Alix's 'interior' life is couched very largely in familiar conventional terms which half deaden the meaning. There is also a riot of commas, printer's or author's it is impossible to tell, but certainly superfluous. These together with the dust cover which, presumably unintentionally, portrays Alix and her children as dark skinned, are the only defects in a book which is a brave attempt to record in a short space the history of a saint and her foundation, the Canonesses of St Augustine, both

of which are of great importance in the life of the Church in the twentieth century.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

FATHER ALLAN. By J. E. Hutcheon. (C.T.S.; 3d.)

BLESSED EDMUND CAMPION. By Wilkinson Sherren. (Douglas Organ; 2s. 6d.)

Reading these two short accounts together one is struck by how much there was in common between the Jesuit martyr and the Hebridean priest Fr Allan Macdonald. Each was poet and scholar and might have had a brilliant career had he wished; each knew much of the world at large, and left it to spend his life for a handful of souls in conditions of great hardship heroically borne. The parallel cannot be pushed too far, but the beatified martyr and the remote island priest, whose name is almost a household word in the West Highlands more than forty years after his death, both gave witness to the transcendence of work for God over all other things. Their qualities shine out even when the writing which records them is poor in quality. In the present case Blessed Edmund Campion has been happier in his biographer who has told the main facts of his life in colloquial prose, interwoven with apt quotations from the martyr's own letters. There is a remark on p. 20 about the activity of Orders and Congregations other than the Society of Jesus which is inaccurate and unjust. Father Allan's biographer might have profitably given more information about him. As it is much of the space is filled by the type of sentimental romanticism which used to be known as 'Celtic twilight'. The mist is thick but the figure of the famous parish priest of Eriskay cannot be wholly obscured and the pamphlet will no doubt, by its very unsatisfactoriness, send readers in search of something better.

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By Rev. James Duff, M.A., Ph.D. (Browne and Nolan; 8s. 6d.)

This work is intended to give students of Latin a suitable textbook by abridging the *Confessions*; theological or philosophical passages which are thought likely to be beyond the reach of readers unequipped for such speculation are omitted. It would be satisfactory to have a text which could be used to introduce senior forms to St Augustine without involving too great digression from the curriculum which examinations demand. Dr Duff's choice of passages would serve admirably if presented in a less ambitious form. As it is the book is unnecessarily expensive through the inclusion of much that is not essential. The introduction of nearly fifty pages is largely repetition of facts present in the Latin text and in the English summaries which preface each section of the latter. The same repetitiveness appears in the thirty or so pages of notes at the end. The introduction might have been defended to some extent, if it had given more general background, or if it had been written in a way to whet the reader's appetite. The book wakens one fear acutely, that it may be used by, or for, something more than schoolboys, as a short cut which will