

ness, which is perhaps intensified again by the system under which she lives.

Altogether it is a gripping and dramatic tale, and the author handles her characters and situations with tenderness and skill. She is evidently well conversant with conditions in Germany, and the book is full of vivid pictures and incidents of its present-day life that cannot fail to fascinate and enlighten the reader.

Mention must be made of the strange conversation in an aeroplane, between the Jewish refugee and a Nazi officer, high above the clouds of distrust. They meet as men, and not as representatives of race or political creeds, and a note of hope is struck when the officer expresses the opinion that one day perhaps the Jew would come back to help in the reconstruction of the future Germany.

J. A. Q. DU PREEZ.

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF SAINTS

DAS WAHRE GESICHT DER HEILIGEN. By Wilhelm Schamoni.
(Hegner, Leipzig; RM. 12.50.)

The purpose of this uncommon book is to provide authentic portraits of saints. Ranging through the centuries, from St. Laurence the Martyr to St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus, the author has been singularly successful in the very arduous task of hunting up contemporary and otherwise trustworthy representations of the saints, before the flights of fancy of their admirers had time to superimpose their subjective reactions upon the objective reality of the human physiognomy they tried to recall. That such falsifications have—of course with the most pious of motives and usually quite unintentionally—often taken place, there can be no doubt. During the last fifty years or so mass-production has furthermore monopolized the making of devotional images and flooded the Christian world from China to Peru with the type of treacly, simpering, inane figures, for which the oleograph seems indeed to be the proper medium of reproduction. The way in which the unspoilt artistic sense of millions of innocent Africans and Asiatics (without counting those of Europe and America) has been corrupted by the mass importation of this kind of industrialized Christian art must make the angels weep 'who look upon their faces.'

Fr. Schamoni's book is avowedly a counter-attack on this unreal world of plaster saints and clichés: and one cannot thank him enough for his courageous attempt. His saints live: they are men and women of flesh and blood, many of whom indeed

resemble everyday people we have met ourselves. St. Helena (from a coin) looks the sturdy inn-keeper she was, before she became an empress; St. Edward (likewise from a coin) seems a very typical Englishman; St. Francis of Assisi (from a fresco at Subiaco of 1224) presents a natural countenance so different from one's presumptions, that one feels it must be a true likeness; the two archbishops of Ravenna, St. Ecclesias and St. Maximianus (from mosaics in San Vitale) are perfect masterpieces of individualisation.

Nearer our times are the portraits painted by great artists—delightful alike to the eye of sense and to the eye of faith: Saints Catherine of Genoa, Thomas More, John Fisher, Jerome Aemiliani, Alexander Sauli (the apostle of Corsica), Peter Canisius, Vincent de Paul and—the most entrancing of all—Aloysius de Gonzaga in all his virginal freshness, taken when he was a page at the Florentine Court. With St. Jean Marie Vianney, we reach the period of photographs, St. John Bosco's and that of 'la petite Thérèse' forming the last of this remarkable series of genuine, authentic, likenesses.

Fr. Schamoni has thus completely succeeded in letting us look upon our saints, as they really were, leaving it to the imagination of the beholder to read in their faces what he thinks he can find there. May I however suggest that this purpose is not furthered by the great number (21) of death masks he has included? He believes that 'the death mask has such great value for us as a portrait, because it mirrors man not at some arbitrary moment, but in the decisive, essential moment of his life.' But does it? Surely the death mask gives us not that moment, but the after-effects of that moment, after-effects moreover on the material body only of the saint, when the saint himself is no longer there. A portrait of a living man represents his bodily frame, as informed by him; a death mask is taken not of a man at all, but of a corpse. No doubt some very fine effects can be obtained, as for instance by the photograph of St. Bernadette on her deathbed: but in this case only, because the saint seems still to be alive and only sleeping. But this artistic illusion is completely destroyed by the majority of death masks which usually make one only too painfully aware of the ravages of death upon the once living tissues. Perhaps the author has thought of his inclusion of so many death masks as the best antidote against sweetly-pretty-pretty: he has in fact only succeeded in becoming macabre.

It is of course understandable that at a time like this, when the Church in Germany is re-entering the catacombs, the minds

of her people should increasingly contemplate death. To many there in their anguish the *Memento Mori* may become the central fact of life and often the only solace. We would be the last to find fault with them on this account. It is indeed significant that the *Martyrologium Romanum* has recently been translated into German and officially recommended for private reading to the faithful. We trust this example will be followed elsewhere, as part of a much needed discipline, for hardening the Christian mentality to the stark realities in *hac lacrymarum valle*, and for counteracting alike the humanistic sentimentalism of a passing age, and the sadistic blood-lust of Neo-Paganism.

For such purpose nothing could be better than the reading and pondering of a page or two of such a book as this: and we hope that Fr. Schamoni will be able to follow it up with further volumes, as opportunity offers. The arrangement of the book is simple: a full page portrait is faced by a page of text which gives the leading features of the saint's life. An introduction of about thirty pages deals with 'God and Sanctity' and 'Portraits of Saints.' In the former section a short history of the canonization of saints is given; from which the reader will gather that, since the modern solemn form of canonization by the Pope in St. Peter's was inaugurated by Alexander VII in 1662 in respect of St. Francis de Sales, only two hundred and thirty saints have thus been raised to the honour of the altars of the Universal Church. The second part of the introduction deals with the artistic principles involved in iconography, questions of realism and symbolism such as agitate all art criticism.

Very useful for devotional reading is the addition of a calendar, in which all the names of the saints whose portraits appear, are given according to the date of their feast. Many of the portraits have never been published before; many are of modern saints, mostly founders of orders, whose likenesses are not generally known. Altogether, an admirable book of reference, which at the same time is an admirable book for spiritual reading.

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS.