

REVIEWS

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP. By Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s.)

This is a sequel to the 'First Theophila Correspondence' which has already won for the author deserved fame as a director of the more earnest youth of today. In *Whatsoever He Shall Say* the subject was the straightforward life of prayer and virtue. Here Fr Valentine tackles the difficulties which inevitably crop up after anyone has set about this life seriously. It is very different in character from Fr Boylan's 'Difficulties in Mental Prayer', but it might well become a companion volume to that very valuable introduction to a true way of prayer. The *Inside of the Cup* deals with difficulties and dangers in prayer, with distractions and temptations. It is extremely practical on the matter of the virtue of purity and its opposing temptations. Here the author calls in the aid of modern psychology in the matter of 'relaxing', etc., thereby exemplifying the contention that the best spiritual directors make good use of, at least common sense, psychology. The modern director can continue to use psychology as of yore, but he must be careful to avoid being used by modern psychology. In this Fr Valentine succeeds for, although he gives a bibliography of works on the art of 'relaxation', he nowhere shows that he pins all his faith to these natural remedies. The result is a most practical and useful book for almost any Christian. Theophila, some will be relieved to hear, is less bumptious and more retiring here, and even hands over to her friend David for some of the correspondence.

JOHN HUNSTER

WIND ON CHARNWOOD. By Bruno Walker, O.C.R. (Privately published; 5s.)

Father Bruno Walker is a Cistercian monk at Mount Saint Bernard Abbey, Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire, and this small book of poems may be had there and at Duckett's bookshop. That a contemplative monk should let his poetic voice be heard outside his own religious enclosure is in itself an event of some interest; he of all men nowadays must have a message for the world without.

Wind on Charnwood contains a dozen short poems in the first twelve pages; the rest of the book is taken up with two much longer efforts, *The Face of the Earth* and *Lord Peace*. Father Walker is a far better craftsman within the limits of conventional forms than when he allows himself the latitude of free verse, and *Distraction*, in twenty-four nicely chiselled lines, is the most attractive poem in the book. It offers what Pater called a 'freshness of thought and feeling'.

Turn me away from your fragrances,
Mould and bracken in rain,

Carnation and rose,
 The precious beyond all price
 Odour of your passing through the spinney
 And through the cornfields and gardens.

Air-Compressor is a satisfactory litany of nostalgic realism, and the *Sonnet*, on page 10, could be used for meditation.

Alice Meynell declared that 'those who have little to say clamour for much space in which to say it', and the author will have experienced the difficulty of sustaining a semi-dramatic sequence in the free style of some of the modern poets. Father Walker has a great deal to say in his two long pieces; he has a sound word-sense, a happy perception of spiritual values, and can create atmosphere.

But the shorter poems seem to strike a more authentic note, and we hope he will strike it again.

EDWIN ESSEX, O.P.

NOT ONE SPARROW. By E. Roberts. (Douglas Organ; 3s. 6d.)

Dust-cover blurbs can mislead by saying nothing in many words. These short stories do show human insight and literary elegance, but these attributes, being the minimum demanded of narrative prose, can cover many defects. These stories of 'spiritual adventure' (I suppose we are now committed to this use of the word spiritual when we mean supernatural or uncommon) range from telepathy to answered prayers, and they set out to show that there is something beyond the chemical composition that many of us mistake for creation. That is all excellent, and undoubtedly needs saying. All the more reason, therefore, why it should be said not only with literary elegance, whatever that might be, but with power and precision. Like any artist, a writer must respect both his medium and his object. The work of God will speak for itself if we portray it accurately and there should be no need for comment and interpretation. Many of these stories would be improved if the last didactic paragraph were omitted. At the same time, if God's work is to be allowed to speak for itself, it must be set before us in words that live. Otiose epithets ('poor little legs'), clichés ('the cup of her human happiness was fulfilled') and woolly substitutes, even when tempered by inverted commas, are all no more than half alive and dull the light by which we should see the Almighty's hand. These defects are all the more deplorable because of the importance of the subject. Nevertheless this writing is not without merit; it has flashes of life and sting ('We never know when we board a crowded bus that we may not be strap-hanging with a saint'), and with pruning could be good.

G. M.

SANCTITY WILL OUT. By Georges Bernanos; translated by R. Batchelor. (Sheed and Ward; 6s.)

Sanctity, it seems, can be bought at too high a price. Six shillings is certainly excessive for a pamphlet of fifty-odd pages, even when they are by M. Bernanos, and one would gladly sacrifice the deplor-