

ST FRANCIS IN ITALIAN PAINTING. By George Kaftal. (Allen and Unwin; 12s. 6d.)

THE SAINTS IN PICTURES: St Francis of Assisi, St Jerome, St Anthony of Egypt, St Catherine of Siena. By Maisie Ward. (Sheed and Ward; 3s. 6d. each).

Dr Kaftal, an acknowledged authority on all matters iconographical, has produced an interesting addition to the 'Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West'. Using the methods which he applied so successfully in his previous volumes on St Dominic and St Catherine of Siena (Blackfriars Publications), he provides a general introduction on St Francis and a discussion of his various 'lives' and legends. There follows a selection of thirty-nine half-tone plates illustrating texts taken from the biographies of Thomas of Celano or St Bonaventure. The paintings are drawn from a wide range of sources, from the altarpiece (1235) of Bonaventura Berlinghieri to a fresco of Ghirlandaio. The special quality of St Francis's life is matched by the mood of his biographers and of the artists who commemorated him, and Dr Kaftal's book, learned and authoritative as it is, is a delightful anthology in praise of a saint who has commanded the hearts of men more surely than any other.

The purpose of the new 'Saints in Pictures' series is to show, by word and illustration, the 'strength and beauty of sanctity'. The first four volumes are a brilliant realisation of this intention. In each case a biography of forty pages (by Maisie Ward) is accompanied by four plates in colour and eight in monochrome. Miss Ward succeeds in giving what is essential (and that includes in each case a perceptive interpretation of the importance of the saints as living persons, with meaning for men today), and her choice of illustrations is uniformly happy. It is a marvel of publishing to have produced this series at so low a price, and the reproductions (by Adprint) are astonishingly faithful and compare very well with those of far more expensive 'art' books. This latest enterprise of the house of Sheed and Ward is certainly their most courageous, and it is to be hoped that it will meet with the success it abundantly deserves.

O.P.

QUEEN OF PARADOX. By Katherine Brégy. (The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee; \$3.00).

Dr Katherine Brégy, who is a much-honoured Catholic writer in the United States, is clearly under the spell of the Queen of Scots. And yet this well-intentioned panegyric, which is touchingly dedicated to Mary herself, is disappointing. It is simply an ordinary American variation on the familiar theme. The style is, naturally, American: it vibrates with the drama that swirled around Mary; it is vehement, indignant

and often colourful. Some irritating blemishes are an excessive use of Stuart as a laudatory adjective, Scotch for Scottish, a reference to Scottish 'Counts', Lindores and Requiem quaintly mis-spelt.

Regretfully it must be said that Dr Brégy has missed a chance to do a real service to her heroine. Almost the last words of the book are 'Mary, Queen of Paradox, despised and rejected by men, limping to martyrdom at Fotheringay with such "smiling cheer" that many have thought she achieved sainthood at the last'. Dramatic words, even moving, but in actual fact a feeble way of summing up the tremendous contemporary Catholic reaction in England and abroad to Mary's execution, and its impact on later generations. The Queen of Scots is much more than a romantic historical figure. It was the loyal remnants of the Elizabethan Catholics who first proclaimed her real greatness when they said, as they did in an official defence of Mary published in Cologne in March, 1587, 'Long live the Martyr Queen with Christ for ever'. Briefly and contemptuously they dismissed the calumnies that overshadowed Mary's life and concentrated on her tragic end which merged into her glorious beginning. It is a pity that Dr Brégy did not follow their example.

An original feature of this literary biography is a 'dramatis personae', which will be helpful to readers unfamiliar with Mary's story. A bibliography of uneven value makes no reference to a recent Historiographer-Royal for Scotland, Sir Robert S. Rait, which is indeed regrettable.

K.M.

LEINSTER, MUNSTER AND CONNAUGHT. By Frank O'Connor. (The County Books, Robert Hale; 15s.)

AN IRISHMAN'S DIARY. By Patrick Campbell. (Cassell; 8s. 6d.)

No one would expect a guide-book by Frank O'Connor to be usual, and this account of the three Provinces has some of the merits and most of the defects that make of him so brilliant and so exasperating a writer of prose. So determined is Mr O'Connor not to fall into the category of the tourist that he abandons many of the starred items; his favoured territory is the hideous little town where he can blaspheme, the ruined palladian mansion or the by-roads of Swiftiana. This means much unexpected information, some expected abuse, and a nice discernment in describing plaster ceilings in a Dublin orphanage or the poetry of Merriman.

It is unfortunate that chronic indignation and a perversity of judgment about a whole range of subjects, literary, political and religious, should make Mr O'Connor's book so lively an irritant (though 'stimulant' may sometimes be the word). It tells us much about himself, but less about Ireland.